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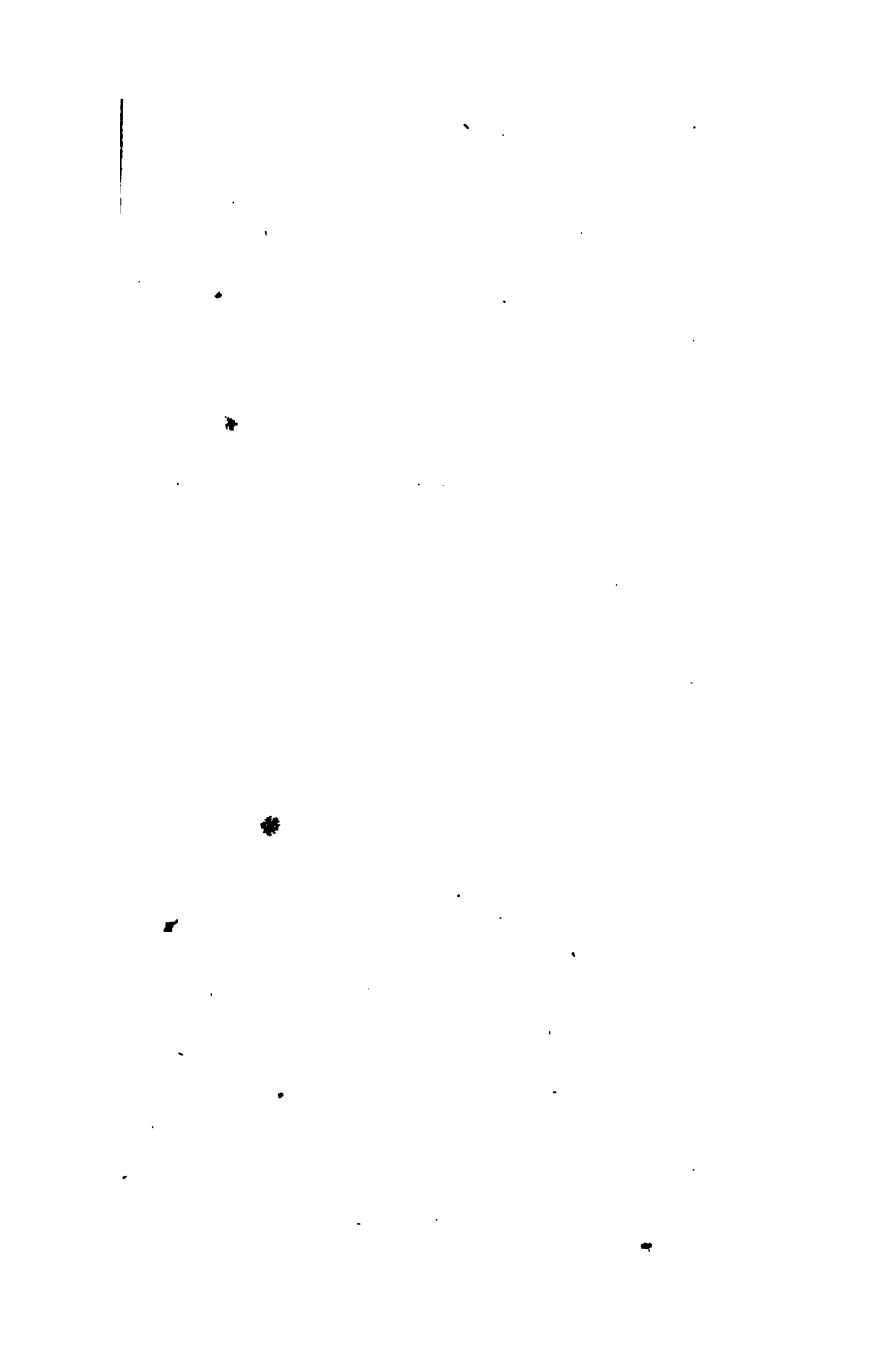
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A
ROMANCE.

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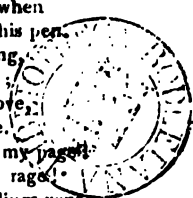
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THE
THREE BROTHERS:

A
ROMANCE.

BY
JOSHUA PICKERSGILL, JUN. ESQ.

A Tale of Horror! which but to hear it told,
Shall freeze the youngest blood to aged cold;
Appal the soul, like to the Author's when
He paus'd, and fear'd the daring of his pen.
In dim'st attire Mystery leads the song,
Inventive Arts protract the issue long;
Hatred, blasphemy, and the viler love,
Gleamless of virtue, are depict above.
Youths of Passion! forth! denounce my page!
For clear revealing all your passions' rage!
But ye of gentler souls! some plaudings vent,
For justly dooming Passion's punishment.



IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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1803.

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THE THREE BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

'Tis night; and night in dismal starless mood,
When demons ill usurp o'er spirits good.
What lone pile is this, which ruins crush the ground,
Which vacant courts inhospitably sound?
What natur'd man is this, whose blazing eye,
Though form'd to charm, he tutors to defy?
Who's charg'd with care, yet wears health's blithest stain,
Whose brows fierce writhe, or arch with high disdain,
Who speaks without a tongue, I am myself alone,
Nor elder maker than myself will own?
Yet seen by athelsts who their God can doubt,
In his Creator they would find him out.

ONE fine evening, late in the autumnal season, the peasantry of a small village, seated on the bosom of one of those mountains which diversify the fertile borders of the French eastern limits, were assembled to recreate after the fatigues of a toilsome day; and to cool their

parched palates with an excellent flavoured wine, and succulent fruitage, the valuable productions of their rich and well cultivated vallies.

The village of R—— contained in itself a very inconsiderable number of houses; but then these, from the embowered mansion of the worthy pastor to the thatched cabin of his meanest parishioner, bore so great an appearance of comfort and conveniency as might induce an attentive stranger to respect the lord of this estate for a man considerate of his dependants' ease, and an honourable exception to that despotic system, which rendered the nobles of Europe in those days barbarous oppressors of their subjects, rebels to their monarch, and weak misguided advocates for the expiring privileges of feudal independence. Whether this conclusion be just or not, we shall hereafter see, when more than nominally intimate with the Marquis de Souvricour, who was the pre-

sent master of these domains; and how far his character could influence that sanguineness of disposition so distinguishable in the countenances of these merry rustics.

But whatever the cause might be, a livelier group could hardly be found, nor, indeed, a more harmless one, than that now met on a slender lawn before the house of the good priest. The labour of the day was finished; and the temperature of the air braced their spirits to the exercise of active sports, in which practice they gained health and vigour; while what the emulous youth found equally grateful, was a frank acknowledgment of his superiority in these feats, testified by some trifling token of conquest, valuable only from the occasion. Men, women, and babes, old and young, the handsome and the ordinary, were every one engaged in the keen pursuit of mirth: the little talents of individuals promoted

the general amusement; and as the object was single, united were all their endeavours to attain it. The laugh broke forth in peals; and jests most innocent heightened it to the shrillest note within the voices' compass; till the thoughtless laughers were glad to hug a full draught of their refreshing wine, and to cry for quarter from the ancient tattlers whose conceits extorted such tribute from their lungs. The flasks being completely drained, the exhilarated company arose to form their usual dance; the younger part quickly removed all impeding stools and benches, while the elders were equally solicitous to order the ceremony as satisfactorily as circumstances would allow: but in this, alas! their endeavours were not gifted with the happiest avail; and it is likely, had the same curious stranger, so observant of their habitations, continued his strictures on themselves, he would have expressed a real surprise at the deficiency

of young men; for the want of whom the prettiest black-eyed girls of the neighbourhood experienced the most mortifying checks to their volatility in the stiff infirmities of their partners; and were (still worse!) often reduced to the disagreeable necessity of pairing with others of their own sex. But it must be understood, that the robust and youthly members of this community, possessed with the noble desire to distinguish themselves in the wars in which their country was engaged, had besought their young lord Henri to incorporate them with the troops he commanded; and their requests being eagerly accepted, they were marshalled by esteemed officers, and marched into Lombardy, where a successful campaign gained them the approbation of the most skilful veterans, furthered by an acknowledgment from their monarch, Francis the first, whose sun of glory long was past.

its zenith, and declined towards his wary adversary Charles the fifth. This was the source of the difficulty just mentioned, and of some little disagreement in coupling the few young fellows that remained; but the Gallic temper boasts the happy faculty of pliability, and a vivacity of mind which forbids their ever letting slip a present pleasure, on account of any recollections of a livelier past, or apprehensions of a dismall future. Behold then the dance in its height: each dancer exerting his or her limbs in their utmost agility to keep time with the liveliest measure a son of merriment ever moved to. As no Frenchman, gifted with any vigour, can so far restrain nature as to sit still on these occasions, the number was great, including all the inhabitants of the place, save half a dozen most decrepit of the seniors, whom their performances on their rude instruments still kept in importance; and about them the eccentric-

cities of the figure often bringing half the group, rendered them in some degree sharers in the entertainment so extravagantly they doted on. Thrice was the time changed, when the ears of all were saluted with the harsh and swelling sound of martial music; it came from a distant quarter, and trembled on the evening gale. All were in instant confusion: the pusillanimous expressed a thousand vague fears; the women snatched up their children and fled into the houses; the garden of the pastor was crowded by a multitude who vociferated most strenuously for the aid of St. John their favourite saint; while the unfortunate musicians, helpless and abandoned, found fortitude in necessity, and recommended to one another the keeping of their seats as the only probable means of restoring confidence to the affrighted people. How long they might have persisted in this resolution it is impossible to say; their attention became

fixed on an approaching peasant, who ran up the acclivity of the mountain, shouting with all his might. Soon as he sat foot on the level, lately so alive, he was eagerly interrogated the cause of his excessive glee. "Permit me a moment of breath," gasped he, "and I will tell you all:—but first give me a glass of wine,—my lungs are as dry as a scorched bladder." His request was immediately complied with; and, after a hearty draught, he acquainted them, that the music they then heard nearing every moment, proclaimed the homeward march of a numerous body of their countrymen, who were returning in a triumphal manner from the Italian campaign. Continued he—"as we have all of us, you know, a brother, or a son, or a father, not to mention multitudes of lovers, engaged in the service these have quitted, I could not find it in my heart to satisfy my own desire of inquiry, without giving you all the

same opportunity: so here I am." This intelligence did not in the least abate the tumult, though it might the terror: every one hasted down the sides of the eminence; and the holy man, who, hearing such disorderly invocations, had come from his study to inquire the motive, beheld the people fleeing from him in all directions. "What can occasion this confusion?" said he, addressing one of the old men whom invincible weakness still confined to his chair. The answer quickly unravelled the cause; and he advanced to the brow of the hill, whence he overlooked a plain confined on every side by the range of mountains. A band of warriors were forming in this plain; remoter companies were wheeling round the foot of a hill, down which steep declivity their fellows filed in long succession; their glittering armour contrasted with the tall shrubs that bordered their sinuous path, and being in the like minute many times

eclipsed and displayed, entertained the sight with an incessant varying of effect. The music now in whispers borne, now bursting full and awful in the ear, raised in the breast of the godly man emotions which on reflection grew painful: for as he beheld the gallant equipage of the equestrian leaders who proudly pranced along the line, the numerous standards floating in the air, and all the bright ornaments with an unsparing hand bestowed, he felt the seductive charm; and with a sigh acknowledged, youth could scarce be proof against the grand deceit. From the gloom this inspired, he was relieved by seeing a party of these gay soldiers detach themselves from the main body: they marched over a slight wooden bridge that crossed a stream which wandered through the neighbouring valleys, and advanced with a nimble step towards the village, while the rest continued their progress along its serpen-

time banks. A joyful suspicion struck his mind, which was instantly confirmed by the shouts of the peasantry, who ran forward to welcome the return of their beloved relatives. He quitted the eminence, and warning them as he passed, left the impotent old men in a frenzy of joy, exchanging the most significant expressions of grimace. The air rung with the acclamations of the soldiers and their friends; and as soon as the commanders permitted the former to disperse, the tables were again covered, the exhausted flasks replenished, and every preparation made for conviviality. "Health to my worthy father!" exclaimed a young chevalier, leaping from his courser to greet the approaching priest. "I am heartily glad to find your looks so sound."

"I thank you, my son," replied the holy father; "and congratulate your safe return."

"It is somewhat to be wondered at,"

rejoined the chevalier, who was the young lord Henri. "Our foes were too gallant not to welcome us, and often, when we met, would willingly have detained us; but seriously, two such valiant nations cannot long be adverse, and in that confidence I have already began to cement the public union by private friendship." Uttering these last words, he led forward a cavalier, in whose countenance so plainly an honest ingenuousness was depicted, that he could not miss a prepossession of the hearts of his beholders. "This is Signor Claudio de Santillana," said he; "the chance of war gave him to my hands, and his great accomplishments have raised him to my heart. I feel myself happy in his affections and honoured in his esteem. We are now such sworn friends, that I could almost firmly believe what in sport I often have heard professed, men must be one time inimical to gain a true sense of each other's value."

"I perfectly agree with that idea," added Claudio; "for from your own conduct I draw my conviction of its truth. Till I became your opponent I suspected not superior conduct; and before I was your captive, knew rather from hearsay than experience that noble generosity which a man in arms should practise to his fellow."

"A truce, my dear Claudio!" cried the lively Henri, "to acknowledgments; or, in justice to yourself, and these my brave followers, permit me to say compliments. For your own treatment look no wider than your own deserts; for the gallantry which gained me so valuable a prize I now thank my valiant comrades; at whose head I have fought from the rising to the sinking of the sun, and never once found cause to cry—come on!" To this speech his armed vassals replied with the liveliest testimonies of a sincere affection: they crowded about him; they wept their

gratitude for his praise; the dangers passed swam before their eyes, and their hearts expanded at the sight of him who had brought them safely through all. A murmur glided among the throng; the voice of respect for a time was gently low; but when the sobbing soldiers told their victories, and bared the numerous scars the price of them, the enthusiastic glow, kindled in every breast, burst into the wildest expression. The crowd pressed around their adored master, and, raising him in their arms, bore him with a triumphant air to the portal of the priest, whose repeated invitations to refresh Henri had accepted.

"My good father," said Henri, observing the attention of his host bent on his eyes, which, truth to say, were swimming with moisture, "I feel the weakness of some natures may often beget the sweetest moments which a strength of wisdom would overleap; and though philosophy disapprove the indulgence of our

feelings, if they only betray that weakness, it need not condemn them."

"They betray themselves," returned the churchman, "who seek to check the emotions of a sensible heart. Heaven forbid I should decry in the children of society, what to many is the only solace for its cares!"

The chevalier continued. "A practiser of the peace can little conceive the effusions of tenderness you have this instant witnessed; nor the mutual attachment which often subsists between the higher and lower ranks in the army: this, as sometimes happens, centering in the person of a favourite chief or leader, mounts by successive proofs of his merit to a degree of adoration, which is returned by his keenest solicitude for their lives and honour. He sees in them the dependants on his skill, the sufferers from his default, and the patient confiders in his care. No intercourse 'twixt man and man can weave a band

so firm as this. I have combated in the company of these men: I have commanded, and they have rushed upon a grove of pikes; we have given ground, and they have screened my person from the foe: I have stood the rallying point to which all were anxious to hasten; and, as the sparkling of my eyes elated their hearts, so became they depressed if apprehension was visible there. They appear to me as sturdy pioneers smoothing my path of glory; and when to their first essay of war I led them on, eager yet diffident, the loss of each, as the artillery swept them down, seemed a limb torn from my body, a sudden check to my pursuit of fame. Now, holy father, is there not reason to rejoice when I restore so many gallant fellows in safety to their homes? nor can you be surprised that I should weep, when I knew that in the multitude, parents there were would vainly seek to embrace their sons; but these I likewise know are few, and

feel with proudest exultation that the grandest token of good generalship is the safety of the victors."

"And the warrior who does not think like you, my noble lord," said the priest, clasping the hand of Henri, "does not deserve to be intrusted with the life of a dog," adjoined Claudio; "much less with that of a man." The vehemence of the speaker produced a smile in Henri, and the Curé, who, taking an arm of each, led them to a small refectory, where the board was neatly spread.

"I am but ill provided for an entertainment," said he, pointing to some cold viands; "but your profession, gentlemen, befriends my poor table, inasmuch as it seldom grants you opportunity to seek for delicacies." "True," replied Henri; "and so far we are obliged to it, as our palates are in excellent order. But these, father!" observing some fruits and wines; "these will be more the welcome, for they are the less

common: tho' we sometimes contrived to devour a hasty dinner, the alarms of this good cavalier's party seldom permitted us to taste the dessert. So, come, Claudio! we will be kinder to you than your former friends, and press you to eat and drink heartily of this delicious produce of the most valued part belonging to my father the marquis's eastern estate." A brisk pretty damsel, niece to the priest, placed the fruits upon the table; then giving seats to the young men, to their infinite regret, she modestly withdrew: however, her absence had little effect in depressing their spirits, for they discoursed with their host on various topics till the first shades of night shed a gloom through the apartment, and warned them to prepare for departure. To the solicitations of the priest, who wished him to sleep in his house, Henri opposed the requests of his brother officers, and the necessity of his attending those troops who were

...marching to a town some leagues distant. These objections were not to be overruled; so, bidding the priest a kind farewell, the two friends hastened through the garden to mount their horses, which were quietly standing near the gate. "At least," said the Curé who attended them from the house; "at least suffer me to procure you a guide."

"By no means," cried Henri; "Pierre is well acquainted with the road, and I have a slight recollection of the country: there can be no danger."

"Pardon me," returned the Curé, "there may be great danger;" and his eyes fell on Pierre who was alighted to repair some accident in the furniture of his steed: "there is a certainty of some danger, as the roads are yet unrepaired since the enemy's inroad. Do not go unguided."

"We shall do extremely well," exclaimed the gay chevalier; "better in my opinion than if burdened with the

company of another: besides, there is no peasant I would exact such service from, so much more happily as he is now employed. Therefore, my dear father, trust us to our fortunes; if they prove ill we shall reflect the more on your kindness." His courser curvetting impatient to be gone, he shook hands once more with the priest, and reined it about to gallop off, but he was prevented by the inquiries of Claudio for his Squire Escolani. "Is he among the dancers?" asked Claudio. "He walked towards them," replied Pierre.

"Go, and bring him to us," said Henri; "but do it artfully, for if my friends should suspect my departure it will not be speedy." Pierre quitted them, and the priest observed that he did not recollect his countenance among the chevalier's ancient retinue.

"He is still new in my service," said Henri, "and his swarthy face prejudices no one in his behalf: but I believe

him honest, and am assured of his courage. His chief fault is an invincible sullenness, which I dislike the more, as you know, father, it is far from being our characteristic." The subject of these remarks now reappeared, being accompanied by a frisky well formed Italian, who protested his ignorance of so immediate a continuance of the journey. He was desired to get astride his horse, which order he and his companion obeying, Henri bade a last farewell to his host, and by the side of his friend galloped down the descent of the mountain.

Their spirits were exhilarated with the wine they had drunk, and they rode with a rapid pace till they reached the side of the river, on which opposite bank the road was traced: but here an unthought of difficulty presented itself to the forward chevalier, in the swelling current, which falling from an eminence not a furlong distant whence he stood, rushed foaming before his horse's head.

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated he, "Signor Claudio, our progress is soon stopped."

"There must be some bridge hereabout," said Claudio; but Pierre being questioned, told them they had passed the only bridge in the futhermost quarter of the plain: "but," added he, "an old peasant lives somewhere in this valley by the profits of a wherry."

"It must be distant hence," observed Claudio; "the current is here too swift for any strength to work a boat across."

"But lower down, Don Claudio," said Pierre, "it is less violent."

"We will then proceed on the margin," said Henri, whom the whole company followed. When they had threaded the serpentine course about an hundred yards, they perceived the waters more tranquil. "It is not unlikely that we may find a place fordable in this neighbourhood," observed Henri; "for 'tis proved that the flood has sunk considerably by the appearance of these aqueous

weeds that deform its borders." In a few minutes they entered on a grey swamp, which in the wet season, as it lay undefended by any embankment, was exposed to inundation; but parched by the extreme heat of the preceding summer, it yielded little to their weight. "We are here much on a level with its surface," continued Henri; "What think you, Don Claudio, shall we venture to brave this formidable stream?"

"My humour is not over anxious to venture a chance of diving," replied Claudio; "and can we find this same ferryman Pierre mentions, 'twill by far be safer to commit ourselves to his skill, than to the power of these horses. I confess myself unwilling to trust mine, for his proficiency in swimming yet remains unproved."

"I will wage this 'gainst any mare our side of the Alps," said the chevalier, stroking the arched neck of his beast, "ay, or stallion either, for

a most steady and persevering courage in the wildest eddy its kind dare plunge amid: but as you are so diffident of the talents of that you ride, we'll e'en prosecute our search for this old man."

"If my lord will permit me," said his squire, "I will go forward, and see whether his house stand not beneath the shade of yonder clump of trees."

"With all my heart," said Henri; "and make good haste, for I am inclined to fear he may be gone to merry-make with the rest of his neighbours."

"I warrant his absence from their mummary," replied Pierre; "'tis a surly unsociable creature." He then sped before his master, who followed him in a gentler mode, and came to a little grove which his precursor had entered; passing through an alley, shaded and overhung by the conjoined boughs of a double row of chestnuts, he was welcomed by Pierre, who said the wherry was preparing for their passage. "Old

Jaques," added he, "though comfortable at a good supper, is glad to quit it for the value of a sous. There is the cottage, and as snug a little convenience as any in these parts."

"Won't your honours please to rest a bit?" asked a sturdy olive coloured youth. "My father is repairing one of his paddles, and it may be a work of some minutes."

"You would do better to assist him," said the Chevalier: "We are eager to cross, and your dispatch shall not go unrewarded."

"My industry would matter little," returned the young man. "It is a slender job, and the handling of two would serve but for one to mar the other's labour: would it not, friend Pierre?"

"I am not very conversant in handicrafts," said the sullen Squire, turning with disgust from so disagreeable an address.

"O ho!" laughed the questioner, "I forgot your present fortune; and,

indeed, myself a little," correcting his risibility, and bowing low to the gentlemen. But Claudio, whose Italian reserve shrunk from such freedom, desired him in a commanding tone to lead to the wherry; and after some weak excuses, backed with clownish invitations to spend a moment in the hut, he was obliged to obey. "I can do nothing without my father," said he to the party who were all safe in the boat; then calling loud on his name, he added, "by St. Jeremy, one might fancy him asleep! do go, Pierre, and see what is become of him." Pierre resented this familiar request by smartly recommending him to be more attentive to his employers' urgency, and less impertinent in their company. The youth returned some blunt mysterious answer, which was followed by the appearance of Jaques, with whose assistance he quickly paddled to the opposite shore. "I ha'n't this luck every day," said the old man, bowing his thanks for

the money Henri put into his hand :
“ these are hard times, monsieur ; what
with the heat of war and the summer,
a poor boatman is scarce a degree from
famine.”

“ Of war and of summer !” exclaimed
the donor. “ Prithee, friend, how be-
came these conjunctively adverse to thy
profit ?”

“ The first has left few people in this
vicinity for me to work for,” said
Jaques ; “ and these the second has ena-
bled to do without me.”

“ Ha ! how so ?” continued the Che-
valier.

“ By scorching the waters far below
what I ever remember,” returned
Jaques. “ In the wintry season the
bridge is covered with them, and then
I do manage to make my harvest.”

“ Thy case is very pitiable,” observed
Henri with a smile ; “ so there is a livre
to amend it ; and as ~~you find~~ the drought
of the weather your complaint, 'tis my

awoke the attention of the fatigued cavaliers to a scene every moment rendered less distinguishable. The transparent shades of eventide were swallowed by the night's darkness; and when they departed from this path for the level country, the full drops which hissed among the herbage and fell from the vast surcharged clouds, prepared them for a subsequent tempest. They journeyed on an even plain which dusky boundaries the eye would not reach; and now found the cottages thinly scattered, and the soil little cultured; the barkings of the watch dog became less frequent, while the ravenous howls of prowling wolves deafened the ear. In a little time the inhabited parts were left behind; the appearance was truly desert; and the knotted brambles, high and indivisible, assured them that quarter could little be frequented: they turned somewhat from their direction, till finding a place where the opposition was more vincible,

they rode forward with an undaunted spirit: the thunder rolled above them harshly grating, while the broad flash with transitory gleam repeatedly misled their dazzling sight.

Henri, who being the best mounted, had hitherto kept the foremost, feeling himself violently shaken in his saddle by the bad footing of his courser, conceived he was again entangled, and encouraging her with his voice, he spurred with all his might in hope to overleap this imaginary thicket: the beast, so furiously impelled, stumbled a few paces forward; and then with a prodigious bound, sprung into a stream which waters gathered above her knees, while their spray dashed into the face of the astonished rider. A flash of lightning which swept along the surface, checked her wild career, and Henri, open to his danger, forcefully reined her to the shore, where he rejoined his apprehensive friend. He now questioned Pierre

“I will call to those travellers,” said Henri; and he was on the point of exerting his voice, when a singular discordant shriek shocked the whole company, and made them doubt of their honesty. “We better had depart,” said Claudio; “these noises are not inconsistent, and the first may induce the answerers to assault us.”

They had not ridden more than half a mile before they were saluted by the sound, though feeble, of what they conceived to be a drum; and a moment afterwards, the yelping of a cur came from the same quarter. They smartly trotted towards the place, till Claudio called to stop. “We know not whither we go,” cried he; the darkness before us is impenetrable.”

“It is merely the borders of a forest,” said Pierre, and the moon emerging full and bright convinced them he was not wrong. They passed a slight bound of trees, and saw in a slender lawn between

them and the body of the wood, a shepherd boy skipping among his flock, which lay quietly grazing, guarded by several large dogs. One of them sprang upon his feet as the wanderers approached, and by its loud barking drew the shepherd to the spot, in whose hands they saw the tabor which sound had guided them.

“We are altogether lost,” said Henri, addressing him; “and will be grateful to you for information what road can bring us to the town of——.”

The senseless answer and stupid laugh of the boy proved him one of those idiots so common in those mountainous parts; and Henri began to despair of learning any thing of him. He gave him money, and the poor creature leapt about with tokens of joy; but all the intelligence Ercolani’s artfullest solicitations could wring from him, was the name of the forest which lay before them.

Meantime the friends galloped on, and

coming to its borders, sought for an inlet: this they were not long in finding, and they were advanced a considerable way, when Henri to the demand of Claudio, professed an entire ignorance of its situation and name. "Have you any idea?" asked he of Pierre.

"I have a slight one," said the Squire; "that it stretches to the banks of the Rhone."

"And I," added Ercolani, "learned from the shepherd, it is notorious by the name of the forest of pines."

"Ha!" exclaimed Henri; "I will continue no farther."

"What fancy is this," said Claudio; "you are bewitched?"

"No, my friend," returned the Chevalier; "but I am resolute to go back." With these words he turned to retread the way, but was opposed by Pierre, who protesting he heard voices in the breeze, besought Claudio with great vehemence, to dissuade his master from so hazard-

ous a conduct. Claudio endeavoured to confirm his friend in the journey, but finding all solicitations useless, he arrested the bridle of Henri's mare, and clapping spurs to the sides of his own horse, violently drew her onward. "Claudio," said the reluctant Chevalier, "I anticipate some miserable misadventure: my father's latest words, when I departed for Switzerland, solemnly enjoined me ever to avoid this frightful forest. Should you visit that part of my estate, said he, ask not of it—give no ear to the tales related—and as you value your own safety and my happiness, shun it with a constant care."

"Esteem not this a breach of duty," said Claudio; "mischance brought us hither, so obedience inclines you to proceed with utmost haste the sooner to be free."

"Heaven preserve us from harm!" ejaculated Henri.

"Amen!" rejoined the fervent Cava-

lier, who scarcely had uttered it, when they heard a report from some sort of fire arms. Mutually they half unsheathed their swords, and returned towards the servants whom they had much out-riden: then they met spurring with all possible speed. "O Eccellenza!" cried Ercolani who first came up, "heard you not that?" "Distinctly," replied Claudio; "but hoped it might be occasioned by your own negligence."

"Oh, no!" cried his Squire. "Oh, no! Pierre had stopped to alter something amiss in his saddle, which he has complained of this hour, and hardly did I hear the noise, when up comes he galloping as if frenzied, and crying, haste! Ercolani! haste! we are beset."

"Do you sincerely think so?" said Henri to his servant, who by this time had joined them.

"I am certain of it," returned Pierre; "these parts have long born an ill name."

"Give me your pistols," desired Henri. The Squire hesitated, but on the demand being sternly repeated, he put them into the hands of his master: the latter ordered the servants to follow closely his and Claudio's course, which penetrated into the thickest of the forest. After unravelling many of its intricacies, the friends entered on a part more free from the trees which environed it. Here they stopped, and waited for their Squires; in a few minutes they were convinced these had missed the way, and their spirits sunk with the idea of their being entrapped by ambushed ruffians. They shouted, but the stillness of the night returned unbroken. Henri cocked one of his pistols, thinking it might serve for a signal; but it flashed only in the priming, and curiously examining it, he was surprised to find it unloaded. He accused the inattention of Pierre, but negligently handling the other, it suddenly went off, and the con-

tents lodged in the brain of Claudio's horse which stood close beside him. The unfortunate beast instantly fell, while its master could scarcely disengage himself to bewail this unhappy incident. Lamentations were vain; and perceiving a light through the trees, they determined to move towards it; but they found the underwood so firmly netted and wound about the vast trunks of the thick leaved oaks, that they were obliged to proceed on foot. Binding the surviving horse fast to a protruding bough, they broke through the thicket, which was plainly the work of art.

They boldly walked down a long vista towards the light, which feeble, and often intercepted by the projecting branches, afforded a very uncertain guide; and the way widening as they went, abruptly terminated on the brink of a deep descent which overlooked a hollow vale. Commending themselves to providential care, they cautiously began to descend

the steep but craggy bank; with extreme hazard they passed the narrow boundaries of its precipices, and in safety reached the bottom. But thence they vainly looked for the light hitherto so friendly; it was no longer visible, and the waning moon, sunk beneath the tops of the forest trees, very little enlightened the gloom by which they were enshrouded. They proceeded with a hesitating step, till they found themselves near the walls of a building apparently of vast extent: these walls they paced around, judging from the moss glazed stones which chequered their progress, that they must be of great antiquity, while the enormous buttresses, which forced them to many a tedious circuit, were incontestible proofs of their strength. A careful search brought them to an ample gateway; on either hand it was secured by mighty bulwarks crowned with turrets high and strong. They deliberated whether they would knock; for a time they were re-

They called aloud with offers of a larger sum, but his steps soon grew remote, and the closing of an inner gate echoed negatively. The dejected friends withdrew, and seated themselves within a few yards of the inhospitable threshold. The fresh gale chilled them with its easterly keenness; their feet and legs were torn by the thorns they had trodden thro'; while the raven's croak and the flapping of the winged bats they had disturbed from covert, invaded them with a creeping horror which the will had not the power to resist.

This oppressive stupor was suddenly interrupted by the converse of approaching men; and the fugitives hardly could shrink beneath a weedy swelling of the earth, ere a party of horsemen, doubling an angle of the wall, came close to their concealment. One of them drew from his side a horn pendent by his belt, which he sounded; and when the blast ceased to vibrate in his ears, the astro-

nished Chevalier recognised in the tones of one of them, who seemed to be addressing a superior, those of Pierre. He felt an emotion of joy at this discovery, and arose with confidence to profess himself; but Claudio checked him by the garment, and whispered him to hearken to their conversation, which precaution might perhaps prevent his becoming a fellow captive with his servant to a ruthless banditti. "I protest," said the voice, "'twas no neglect of mine, Signor! the Chevalier rides so thoughtlessly, that it was with the greatest difficulty I kept a sight of him so long."

"Had you preserved a more considerate care," answered a voice deep and sonorous, "this separation could not have happened."

"I performed the best of my abilities," replied the first speaker, who the friends were now convinced was no other than Pierre: "and no master of mine can have reason to doubt it: however, if


you'll mount me afresh with half a dozen beside, I'll pledge my reputation, so well I recollect this neighbourhood, to bring them safe and willing to your door." Whether this proposal was approved or not, the listeners could not gather from the answer, which was drowned in the opening of the gate. The same figure appeared, and throwing it wide, the whole party entered; but in a moment a clamour of voices arose, and the friends distinguished that of the superior loud in anger, reprehending the porter in terms, which suffered them not to doubt the cause was his refusal to their admission. "We will spread ourselves about," said Pierre, returning with others beneath the archway. Then speaking aloud, "If my master and his honourable friend remain in this vicinity, say, whoever meets them, the bounteous lord of this mansion invites them to needful repose and refreshment." Hearing these words the Chevalier leapt

forth, and was greeted by his Squire, of whom Claudio solicitously demanded the fortune of Ercolani. He was told they had separated in the wood. As Pierre then gave them to understand that he by chance had fallen in with these horsemen, in whose leader he found a manly concern for their misadventures, Henri and Claudio passed into a large court, anxious to pay their respectful thanks; but they were told he was gone round with most of his train to the stables, which lay in a different quarter: being likewise apprised that they were committed to the care of the old man, they followed him, attended by Pierre, to a narrow flight of crazy steps, which, being ascended, brought them through a small postern into a hall of undistinguishable extent, as their only light was an expiring lamp carried by their grey bearded guide. "You must bite your fingers here," croaked he, "till I return." "As for you," atten-

tively surveying Pierre, "I mistake much if you be in want of a conductor." He then withdrew, and Pierre, bowing as he passed, left his master and Claudio in total darkness.

The peculiarity of their adventures, and the warnings of the good priest, by them so verified, furnished matter enough for comment, till the old cheat re-appeared; who, slightly bidding the Cavaliers to follow, led them up the hall, which teemed a vapour that damped them through their garments. Coming to the further end, he struck open a door with his foot, and ushered them into a second hall of smaller dimensions. Numerous entrances to different rooms were ranged along its sides, and through one of them, a cheerful blaze of light shone across the pavement.

"You'll find accommodations there," said he, pointing; and sullenly returned out, shutting the door. The quickness of his motion startled them; and they



even conceited from the rattling of its iron work, that he was employed in barricading it; but each, though wishful to examine, was ashamed to confide his suspicions to the other; and so with a doubtful step they both entered the appointed apartment.

This was not gloomily spacious, as they had feared would be the case, and a brisk wood fire, which sparkled in the hearth, inspired them with a kind of confidence. They closed the door; and while Claudio drew a couple of unwieldy chairs nigh the flame, Henri divested himself of some professional cumbrances.

Entirely at their ease they sat conversing on the fortunes of the night, nor did they attend to the coming in of some person, whom they mistook to be the old man, till the step firm and considerate, sounded a disagreement to the tottering of his years. Hastily turning round, they beheld a Cavalier of a thrice noble and stately mien: his figure grand

and august, seemed fashioned in the vast capacity of an Herculean mould; and as they surveyed his supple limbs of peerless symmetry, they secretly acknowledged 'twas wrong to fancy humanity could not reach perfection. He looked attentively on the Chevalier, slightly inclining a head nature wisely might make her boast. His full dark eyes humbled the gaze of beholders, and his proud lip, thickened with disdain, projected conscious superiority to men, and self independence of aught earthly. His high forehead was crowned with hair black as jet, which in waving curls wanted about his temples, and crescent eyebrows of a fellow hue, strikingly contrasted with the polished whiteness of an unblemished skin. His attire was becomingly simple, for a king's parade could not have added grace to what was altogether majesty; and from a belt, which begirt his loins, depended a ponderous scimitar, a needless appendage to

him whose presence was calculated to charm or dismay. They might have judged him even as young as themselves, but the significance of his eye-beam, the expressiveness of his motion, proved him far ripened beyond the greenness of immaturity; and with superstitious fancy they even doubted if that aspect could ever have known the vacant smile of babyhood. The heedlessness of his bow Henri in another would have treated resentfully, but before him his spirits sunk for an interval awestruck; he actually trembled, and saluted him with the sensations of an inferior origin: but Claudio fearfully regarded him, retired behind his friend, and seemed much troubled in a remembrance.

He clasped an arm of one of the ponderous chairs, and uplifting it with a single hand, bore it to the table on which Henri had cast his sword, belt, and other matters: placing it there he sat down. While his eyes were fixed atten-

tively on the crackling faggots, the Chevalier stole a cautious consideration of his features; but when he rolled those eyes around, such was the lustre emanative in his glances, spectators were dazzled and confounded.

“Whom have I the honour to entertain?” at length asked he, addressing himself to Henri; who immediately knew the tone so grand and satisfactory to the ear, to be the same he had heard without the walls. “The son of the marquis de Souvricour;” answered he. “And ’tis he now returns you thanks for this goodness:”—at the same time rising and rendering his respects. The Superior oppressed him with a long and fixed regard, and could the confused Chevalier have looked him stedfastly in the face, he would have seen its lineaments converted into the mystic characters of a heart, which adjudged him so like his father as to justify its hatred. However, the expressions of the Superior were unread;

and smoothing them over, he continued, —“ And whom am I to know in this gentleman?”

“ An honourable friend to me,” added the Chevalier; “ and an Italian officer of approved worth.” These questions answered, the triumvirate preserved a silence, which lasted till the stranger looking at Claudio—“ An Italian! from what part of Italy?”

“ From that part of the Alps which stretches within the territories of Venice,” answered Claudio.

“ Indeed!” exclaimed the questioner in an inward tone.—“ Those parts are not unknown to me. Are you of family?” Claudio appeared backward to inform him in this, but his friend, who thought the question unheard, repeating it—“ Of an honest one,” he answered:

“ And your name?” inquired the curious stranger—“ Is Jaquino,” replied he in a faltering accent. “ But that of your family?” “ Guipellini,” answered

Claudio : a transient animation passed over the Superior's countenance, and Henri heard with amazement names foreign to those by which he had been taught to know his friend.



The stranger pondered for a moment; then attentively viewing Claudio, said, "I have visited the country you mention: it is a romantic wild; recollect you many noble houses in your neighbourhood?" "I left it in my childhood," replied Claudio; "and the various trials I since have undergone, have destroyed all my remembrance of what you ask." With these words the stranger's features dropped the keenness of expectance, and he relapsed into silent rumination, while Henri again started at an account the reverse of what the Italian had ever given him.

Each one now indulged in a long reflection; the minds of the friends were harassed with ideas not very widely different, when the unknown, carelessly

throwing his arm across the table, hastily withdrew it, with a sudden contraction expressive of a received hurt. He glanced over the board, and outstretching his arm, clasped a gold chain, on which was pendulous a slight cross, ornamented with gems, which the Chevalier was used to hang about his neck. This it was occasioned his pain, and on this his phrenetic mood wreaked its blasphemous revenge: after considering it for an instant with a grin ineffable, he whirled it from him, and it shivered into innumerable splinters upon the floor.

This impious action moved the friends with a rising horror, and looking upon the profane abuser, they saw his features wrinkled into deformity; a thousand horrors shone from his eyes, and the sparks of brightness whence they issued, rolled as though uncertain of their object. A pause of recollection, however, restored him to the semblance of tran-

quillity, and conquering the stern observance of his guest, he again sunk into a profundity of thought. The anxiety of the friends was somewhat relieved by the entrance of servants with a supper, which, being silently spread upon the table, they withdrew. The Stranger coldly desired them to eat, but did not at all apologize for the homeliness of the meal; and this being hastily and unsociably dispatched, an attendant, who appeared, was ordered to summon Nicholas. In a few minutes the old man stood at the entrance; and understanding he was waiting to conduct them to their chamber, they rose from their seats, and, bowing to the stranger, were about to quit the room; but Henri, recollecting his intention of an early departure, returned towards him, and, in a manner manly and polite, told him, as they meant to leave his house by the rising of the sun, they would not miss the present



opportunity to thank him for his hospitality. He was interrupted by the abruptness of the Superior, who springing from his chair delivered with a steadfast look and impressive tone—"There needs no thanks, Sir, I am ever provident, my actions should reward themselves." Uttering this, he snatched a lamp, and stalked from the apartment. They heard his rapid strides echo through the hall, and the violent closing of a door convulsed the whole building.

"Strange!" said the Chevalier, who, taking his sword which had been thrown aside on a distant stool, followed the scowling Nicholas. He led them to a different end of the hall than that through which they entered; then guided them up a long winding flight of stone steps to a gallery, which with a succession of apartments, naked and forlorn, being passed, he brought them to a spacious

corridor; at which top he opened the door of a chamber, and telling them they were to sleep there, committed a lamp to the hands of Claudio, and hastily withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

Now pores his memory on its deep distraction,
Past sorrows present in his mind's reaction:
Domestic sweets how soured to bitterest strife,
Paternal wrongs that cancel filial life;
And eke a sponsal love which Pagans foul divide,
Immortal grief he weds instead of mortal bride.
His lids the while unsluice recording dews of woe,
And anguish damps his limbs which ne'er did fear of foe.
Pathetic griefs! now first to friendly ear reveal'd,
Can sympathy assuage? ah! why so long conceal'd?
For who can list this tale with unbath'd cheek and eye,
May've more of Zeno in him, but less of Christ than I.

HENRI waited some time in expectation of Pierre's attendance; but, as he did not appear, the friends fastly secured the door, which was the only one, and began to examine the apartment allotted to them for the night. It was spacious, lofty, and melancholy: the walls, completely shrouded with tapestry, were topped by rich cornices of golden fretwork, and these embroidered the crumbling ceiling, which was once splendid, in a now faded embossment. The flooring,

still slippery with polish, was curiously inlaid in the style of the mosaic: the furniture, antique, decayed, and unwieldy, was covered with a shaded crimson, that matched with the moth-eaten curtains, which fell before three long windows of gothic narrowness, defended by lattices, and stained towards the roof in fantastic variety. An awful magnificence, grand though in decline, discovered itself in the whole; but the beauties of particular embellishments their lamp ill permitted them to inspect, as it trembled in the wind, which gushed through many a rent in the hangings.

They now surveyed the bed, which stood within an arched recess opposite the casements: its furniture was gorgeously worked, and the tester nearly touched the ceiling; a fringed counterpane was the only modern appearance that they remarked, when, casting his eyes towards the head, with a wonder that benumbed his faculties, Henri beheld

the arms of his father's house blazoned in colours of a still brilliant die. He stood oppressed with amazement till the motion of Claudio, who was trimming the lamp, awakened him to reasonable thought. He reflected on his unintentional entrance of a forest interdicted him in the most impressive terms—on the strangeness which now struck him to have attended his admission into this mansion—on the peculiarities of its master—and the sight before him: all these were so fresh to his experience that he felt an assurance of their hidden connection. Claudio seeing him lost in contemplation, gently slapped him on the shoulder, and, with an effort of gaiety, asked what he found anew to think so deeply of. Henri expressively pointed to the objects of his attention, but perceiving that his friend did not understand in them any thing remarkable, in a few words he explained it. "I had no suspicion," concluded he, "that

the wonders of this night could have received such an addition." "I apprehend you," said Claudio; "but know I only wait your attention to relieve myself from any doubts you may entertain of my veracity."

"Pardon me! you widely mistake my meaning, if you think it at all allusive to a doubt of your honour: yet do I frankly confess myself surprised at your answers to the interrogatories of the stranger."

"But if I disclose the considerations which prompted those answers?"

"That depends on your opinion of me," observed the Chevalier: then taking Claudio's hand—"my dear friend, if you deem me worthy your confidence, fear not its abuse."

"I do not," replied Claudio; "yet, but for this eventful evening, might never have entered on the torturing relation of my real parentage, and those sad incidents endurance has indelibly en-

graven on my memory. Your curiosity concerning the stranger likewise induces me to be candid ; wherefore, I dare, as you will hear, acknowledge myself ignoble, even sordid in family and estate." "Is this stranger known to you?" asked the impatient Henri.

"He, or his entire resemblance," answered the Italian. "But for these devices, I think that they have shocked you with groundless apprehensions."

"'Tis mystery all!"


"What I can clear you shall no longer remain in ignorance of," said Claudio: and sitting down by the side of his friend, he addressed him in the following language.

"When I told our impertinent host that I came from the Venetian state, I did not depart from the strictest truth: my father was a sturdy mountaineer on the skirts of the romantic Alps, where he possessed a homely cab'n, begirt with

a scanty piece of ground, which was parcelled into vineyards. My earliest situation, in the retrospect of memory, represents me labouring under the severity of a sad illness, which, I have heard my mother say, confined me many months to a bed, and, even when yielding to the goodness of my constitution, preserved so strong a hold, that a lapse of years could only restore me to the soundness of nature. I seemed when growing sensible to the objects around, to be degraded, I knew not how, nor from what: my parents have often told me, the delirium of my fever had bewitched me with such extravagant fancies, that the tone and demeanor of haughtiness I assumed, sometimes procured me chastisement. Indeed, the emotions they inspired in my bosom were very different from the filial transports I have seen in other children; and, since then, I have often condemned myself for neglecting to pretend the affection nature

really seemed to prescribe: but, a strange conception of superiority cooled my behaviour, and, though stedfast to my duties, I disdained the affectation of a love, they sought not to nourish. At the time I have just mentioned, my age, according to their account, did not exceed four years; but, as you may judge, I was forward in my wit, and when maturer grown have been remarked for an earlier dawn of manhood than my youthful companions. My temper, though soft, was rendered by my confinement humorous and irritable. I disliked my clothes, their colour and quality; accustomed to the ease of a couch they galled my limbs, and my weakness was burdened by their thickness: my palate too, become delicate from a regimen, was disgusted with the coarseness of the victuals afterwards given me; but habit and appetite soon reconciled me to these. I involuntarily shivered when I considered the poverty of the hut; and the rudeness of my


parents, who were rough in their mildest mood, caused my little heart to struggle with emotion till my eyes overflowed with tears. In short, discontented and fretful, my spirits sunk into a dejection the least trifle ruffled; and once the accidental utterance of the name Lewis, by which a little playmate saluted me, sounded a tender familiarity with my ears, my melancholy could not brook, and I burst into a violent crying. To my mother, who questioned me as to the cause, I found it impossible to give an explanation; and the poor little wanton was chid for mischief-making. She was the only daughter of a Spanish nobleman, who, his estate being completely ruined by the intestine wars betwixt the Christians and Moslem kingdoms, emigrated into Italy to receive a bequest of property in the right of his lady. To her my mother was a chosen attendant, and when Ricardos (my father) courted her, he found it more difficult to gain the appro-



bation of the countess, than the heart of his mistress. However, though withdrawn from the house, my mother still proved her a munificent patroness, and, in gratitude, left her husband and myself, to nurse the infancy of her newborn daughter. She continued with them till the unfortunate Countess was obliged to flee from her house with its guilty lord, whose indulgence in the pernicious habit of gambling plunged them into inextricable misery. They settled near the suburbs of Verona, and, his wife soon after dying of a broken heart, the disconsolate Count entrusted his beloved Camilla entirely to the care of her nurse. In a short time, dissatisfied with inactivity, and comfortless in expectation, he came to my mother's dwelling, and gave to her a small sum of money ; promising quarterly to renew it: then tenderly embracing his child, he departed with bitter self-accusations, but had never since re-appeared, or sent token

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of existence. Thus was the friendless infant thrown on the charity of strangers, whose narrowness of means, unsupported, could no longer continue the little style which had been hitherto practised towards her; but clad in coarse apparel, and faring like themselves, they nourished her with care and mildness. They saw her daily improve in an endearing vivacity, and my mother, who greatly swayed Ricardos in the kindness of his conduct, so warmly loved the tender nursling, that I am assured, had such a sacrifice been necessary, she would more willingly have parted with her own son. Her distinction in caresses, which, babies as we were, did not escape our apprehension, abated no jot of the mutual fondness we had conceived; and when this distinction went farther, as it often did, in trifling presents and the like, the bewitching art, wherewith she contrived secretly to share them with me, betokened a disinterested mind,



then in blossom, but which I afterwards beheld budding the frankest generosity.

“ With the attachment of natural brother and sister we passed the earliest stages of childhood, and commenced those years, in which the improving keenness of the intellectual faculties craves the food of knowledge spontaneously, as the body its proper nutriment. We curiously enquired of things hitherto only admissible to our senses, but the answers proved the people about us quite as ignorant as ourselves; for a monotonous life of daily labour, nursing their minds in idleness, had almost occasioned a total privation of thought; and though happy in an unmanly contentment, beyond the narrow concerns of their necessary occupations they were unable to inform, because barren of idea: so, the only novel intelligence we could obtain, was the certainty of a developement of all our ignorance in works of wonder entitled books. To get one of these became our

eager endeavour: the desire for instruction once whetted no obstacle can blunt; and a superstition we simply conceived, that these had a magical property of unfolding all our wishes might suggest, occasioned the hours of leisure to move with increase of heaviness. By a lucky fortune the long sought inestimable prize came to our hands, and, unsuspicious of a progressive acquirement of its contents, we hoped readily to extract the solution of what our fancies projected; but, soon we perceived the necessity of learning to read before we could understand, and although the letters were not unknown by me, for after a little hesitation I could point out each, we found it impossible to improve without an instructor. This, at length, we gained: fortune was interested in our behalf, and my little fame for a gift, esteemed supernatural, but which was really surprising, as neither of my parents knew one letter from another, had no



small share in procuring us tutorship. Our progress was rapid, because we were earnest; and each step to knowledge disperses the gloom which obscures those above it. Our pleasures came in rapid succession; for learning was delight, and labour recreation: the efforts of each strove to keep pace with the kindness of the other; and while I tempted the frisky chamois to a mild imprisonment in her bower, or twined the straggling eglantine to encircle the casement of her chamber, she would anxiously contrive me nets and lines for fishing, sporting pouches, belts, slings, and a thousand such, I needed, to equip me for those pursuits, which chief object in success was her satisfaction. The dance in the evening was the cheerful winding up of the day: an early rest ceased with the rising sun; and we improved in vigour and stature with visible strides towards maturity.

“Our increasing affection was remarked

throughout the neighbourhood; but this, which hitherto had strewed our path with flowers, now threatened to gall us with its thorns. In one of our pastimes I impetuously opposed that part of the ceremony which prescribed an exchange of partners, unwilling to resign Camilla, whom as yet I had enjoyed: she not less fond, but less passionate, prudently complied with the established custom. This I resented extremely, and captiously overlooking the ungrateful rule, directed my anger so pointedly towards the fair compliant, that nothing could be less equivocal than my intentions to vex her; but, gifted with a great equanimity, she toyed with her companions, and feigning disregard to my unkindness, conducted herself with a becoming spirit. Stung in my feelings, I behaved at supper with a marked resentment; removed my seat, which ever was beside her's, and retired to bed merely bidding her a cold

good night. I experienced how vain was the hope for sleep; a bitter jealousy rankled in my bosom the tyrant of a new dominion; and the hour seemed tardy and comfortless. By and by, I imagined that I heard violent sobbings from the adjoining apartment which was Camilla's: my heart bounded within me. Gently stealing from my couch, I wrapt my cloak about me, listened more attentively, until convinced that I was not mistaken, I could no longer restrain myself, but opened her door, which never was more than latched: I cast myself on my knees by her bedside, and wringing her hands, earnestly intreated her to pardon the cruelty that could breed in her a single throb of sorrow. I was too sincerely beloved to meet upbraiding; for she felt reconciliation too sweet to delay it: while we wiped away each other's tears we forgot the cause, and arm in arm sunk into a tranquil slumber, which dearly lasted till the brightened

rays of the sun, by playing on our eyes, awoke us to our morning orisons, the unblemished children of nature. This occurrence first discovered to us the power of a passion which we long unknowingly had fostered: the tenderness we mutually felt wanted a name, till on this ebullition, so invasive of our peace, we clearly ascertained the almightiness of love. The discovery was not unpleasing; each to the other revealed the secretest feelings, and a thousand apprehensions sensibility suggested, a thousand vows from either promised never to realize. So became a new source of happiness opened unto our hopes; the pure declarations of a perfect passion stole into our discourses; and hand in hand we trod the way of pleasure, for innocence was our guide.

We were admirably situated to observe the wonders of nature, and our frequent excursions throughout the

country acquainted us with its chief scenery; yet my lovely mistress, who early manifested a taste for drawing, would often turn from the sublimest prospects to consider the meeker beauties of a simple flower, over which she would sigh from her incapability of its delineation. How to compass her gratification I for long was studious, and that with so much secrecy and success, that I surprised her by displaying on a table, while she was momentarily absent, the instruments so much desired; and the more precious esteemed from the mode of presentation. With them she anxiously began to practise. I culled for her the choicest flowers of the field, and with delight I watched the first plain essays, by degrees, improve to a mellowness of shade and accuracy of tint, that emulated the charming originals. Afterwards grown bolder, she attempted works of arduous complication, in which she so well succeeded that the walls of

our cottage were nearly covered by the productions of her ingenuity. Even in this obscurity her superior talents died not for want of exercise, but whether she sketched a picture, or attuned her voice to some light provincial instrument, a refined elegance distinguished the performance. Her melodious tones were lulling beyond my expression, and softly stealing through the ears made a captive of the heart without alarming it to resistance; the simplest canzonette received new graces from her lips, and when she adapted to some pensive notes the verses that I in homage to her beauty formed, every nerve was thrilled by rapture. Though very affable in her carriage, she knew in a great measure how to repel the obtrusion of any rustic who might presume on her sweetness of temper: by them all she was much beloved, and her accomplishments admired. Indeed, as no one day stole by uncultivated, the circling years brought fast

advancement to mental and personal excellence.


But we now began to feel that our peace, though hitherto almost uninterrupted, was not exempt from those dreadful shocks, which, in youth or age, all who walk this worldly course inevitably must endure.

My mother suddenly fell sick: her disorder, though harmless in its first symptoms, was fatal in the issue; and so rapid in its progress, that in a very few days she was confined to her bed. I was not at liberty to attend her during her illness, for a business quite new to me employed me at some distance from the dwelling: nor would my utmost anxiety permit me to neglect it; as my father harshly enjoined an indefatigable diligence, and even threw out threatening hints of the severe consequences of his being disobeyed. So was I deprived of the opportunity whereby to perform the last sad duties becoming a son, and

to receive the expiring breath of a since lamented parent. A circumstance ever to be looked back to with the keenest regret, for I afterwards learned how repeatedly she enquired for me: when she found her life to be fast ebbing, and yet I did not approach, she pressed the hand of Camilla, and, though gasping for breath, three times uttered my name with the most violent agitation: but her attempt to speak further was prevented by Ricardos, who constantly kept near the bedside: forcefully interfering, he brokethem asunder, and desiring Camilla not to disturb his dear wife's latest moments, put her from the door. Notwithstanding his stern prohibition she fondly lingered anear, and much was shocked by the convulsive outcries of the departing spirit; among which she many times distinguished the expressions child and Claudio: they gradually subsided into a few struggling sighs, which also discontinued; so that the silence of the cham-

ber was only broken by the weighty tread of Ricardos: and Camilla burst into a violent crying when he came forth and discovered to her the melancholy spectacle of her inanimate nurse. Think not from what I before said, that I was totally void of any attachment to my mother: far otherwise! Compared to my father she was gently kind, and long had mediated betwixt him and us: and her death leaving him to an unrestrained harshness, it shortly increased to so extravagant a severity, as caused us the more bitterly to lament the heaviness of our loss. His absences were the only relief to our aching hearts; and they soon became more frequent, being sometimes prolonged the space of a week. Meantime the recent event bred a despondency in my mistress's breast which vainly I strove to divert; for the consciousness of her unfortunate parentage, with her inability to claim an individual relative, which in the life-time of her

another tone; digress from the exploits to the motives that led to their performance; and utter much of that rank sophistry, which, experience hath taught me, knaves invent, idiots repeat. Clasp- ing his hands in a transport near to fury, he would exclaim, Is not the law of nature forceful? do not the strong, through all the gradations of created beings, prove this first principle by their oppressions of the weak? And that original equality, the right of birth, are not we deprived of it whilst in the womb? can the efforts of completest manhood recover it? No! then be those efforts revengeful of its loss. The novelty of such sentiments at first hearing caught me; I even fancied a grandeur in their opposition to the cultivated doctrines of mankind; but mine was not a bosom wherein they could ferment the passions to any fatal height; love was there supreme, and love reigns not where anarchy and outrage spring. Re-



flection caused me to detest them; and my mind expanding in reason, I grew bolder as I spake. Are the enormities of robbers the deliberative effects of this mode of idea? does it not then tend to arm each man's hand against his fellow? the thought needs must be foul when its relative actions are so. For that sacred right you mention, I confess myself quite ignorant of its worth, as I am insensible to its loss. That which I really feel sacred, is freedom of opinion; yet heaven warrants not that to an independence of reason; and when any man, even you my own father, by word or act prove adverse to that reason, it would denote an unmanly weakness in me not to remonstrate, and an indefensible guilt to acquiesce. Yet young, injury from private malice or public tyranny has not reached me; when I feel the sting it will be time to enact revenge, and not through prejudice to fall on my fellow creatures, from whom

I never may receive provocation so to do. This speech drew not from him any tokens of resentment: he insinuated his agreement with its justness, but at the same time avoided that kind of conversation which might lead to its repetition: indeed, the tone wherewith I swelled the dictates of my heart confounded him, and I then first felt a certainty of the pre-eminence before mentioned. His nocturnal wanderings increased in mystery, until his arm being for long disabled by a stab inflicted by a strolling assassin, he during that time continued within doors.

Camilla's grief had now by degrees declined; and the dejection, which I feared would settle on her mind, yielded to her renovated spirits: sanguine youth, unwilling longer to pore on the misfortunes of the past, directed us to look for a cheerful future; accordingly we resumed our diversions, which had suffered mournful suspension. Little did we an-

anticipate events ripe for action, which were destined to revive the expiring embers of our affliction with a fresh gigantic load of calamity.

On a certain evening, while we were mingled with the peasantry in a lively dance, the young Baron of those domains, slightly attended, rode towards our merriment: he stopped a moment to remark our execution, then alighted from his horse, advanced amongst us, and, catching the hand of my lovely mistress, loudly declared his inclination to participate the sport. I was more than half disposed manually to chastize his insolence; but as the delighted vassals jostled me from him, the first transports of my indignation had time to subside; and being roughly withdrawn by my father, I quitted the throng to observe it from a little distance. The dignity of her partner, his splendor of habit, and marked preference, I imagined could not be unprized by Camilla: adoptive of

his accomplished movements, I saw her docile limbs assume new graces, while the exercise, timed to a wildness of measure, brought the spirited blood crimson to her cheeks. From the torments of suspicion I was a little relieved by Camilla's complaining of fatigue, and requesting me to return home, while to the solicitations of the Baron (whose pride forsook him in her presence) to continue on the green, her answers were languidly negative: however, he persecuted us with his company to the very door; but the familiar offer of a salutation at parting was resentingly denied by Camilla, until the angered Ricardos frowned his will for compliance: he then returned with the Baron and left us to enter. Never did night more harass me than that which ensued, nor was lover ever more ingenious in self torture: the value of Camilla never more clearly appeared to me, and I ached with apprehension at the addresses that value must

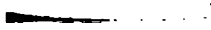

invite. She was of that slender form which interests the heart without enthrallment of the eyes: her chief beauty sprung from animation; so that the sweetness of her tones, the significance of her countenance, aided by a carriage, unaffected because untutored, made an hour of familiarity irresistably captivating; for the gentle artlessness, whereby she stole her empire over you, lulled all apprehension, and the passions only awoke from their incautious security, to experience the effects of a power, they equally felt unable and unwilling to baffle. Stricken with love myself, I thought it impossible that man could behold her with indifference; and though fearless of any mercenary bartering of her affections, yet, sensible to my own deficiencies in rank and wealth, I feared that some one, more fortunately gifted, might effectually supplant me in her breast. The temptations of the world are thought sweeter while untasted;

and if displayed before her, I conceived it to be probable that Camilla in the eagerness of youth, might withdraw from that favorable obscurity, and forget a lowly peasant's son amid the brilliant circle of titled suitors. So much I was overcome by these reflections, as to weep like a babe; so that when I quitted my pillow, I left it soaked with the tears I had shed.

The day was fresh when equipped for hunting I sallied abroad, my mind so agitated that it felt a degree of phrenzy, and was ready to wreak its fury on the harmless flocks that lay in my way: not finding any village sportsman at the rendezvous, whence we were used to go in search of the destructive adversaries to the herdsmen, I wandered about with an unsteady gait, until guided by a horn, I overtook a party attending a noble of the neighbourhood. I insinuated myself into their company, and assisted them to beat about for game. For some time

they entertained themselves with harmless pursuits; but, as my irritated temper esteemed that to be insipid which was not dangerous, I sought to rouse a nobler chace; and very soon had the good luck to disturb a huge shaggy bear: it rushed from its covert, and growled a surly defiance to the band, who, daunted by the terrific monster, pusillanimously gave ground; but hovering in the front, eager for distinction, I discharged a sharp arrow into his side; whereupon the galled savage sourly turned, and retreated over the country towards its caverned haunts. Encouraged by its flight and emulous of my boldness, the shouting huntsmen followed, and drove it before them into a kind of dell, whence it only could escape by returning the way it entered; but that path was instantly choked by its pursuers, who were not yet sufficiently recovered from their first alarm at its appearance, to venture a combat with it within spear's length. Inconsi-

ed. If the sight of a female rudely mistreated by a man aroused my indignation, what emotion of rage did I not feel, when convinced that that female was no other than my idolized Camilla? The ruffian, misnamed a Baron, free'd her not from his hold, but turning at my approach, bade me in an authoritative mode to be gone. The arrogance of command I never was disposed to obey, and never less than at that instant; so wielding the relics of my boarspear, my only weapon, I smote him with all my might athwart the face: he staggered, and faintly released my mistress: she darted into my arms, and I opposed my weapon against the expected assault of my rival, but I found that he dastardly had fled, although a sword was hanging by his side. Calmed by the assurances of her safety, Camilla told me, that the Baron had come to the cottage about an hour back, and required her to accompany him in a walk: that Ricardo's com-



mands swayed the consent, which she had had sufficient cause to repent. I foamed with fury while she uttered this; till affrighted by my agitation, she employed every art to assuage it. Kneeling at my feet, she vowed unutterable love, and imprecated a thousand evils on her own head did she the least swerve from that constancy which she professed to be her duty. As she reclined upon my bosom, her blandishments were compatible with her words, among which, with many endearing epithets, she sighed, Husband! The sound thrilled me with ecstasy unknown, the conscious spirits rallied about my heart, and I embraced her with an ardour passionately warm; but in her eyes shone such mingled love for love and confidence in my honour, that compunction chilled me: I arose from the bank superior to the tyranny of nature, and engaging her arm within mine, returned to the cottage.

No sooner did I enter, than my father

commenced a severe lecture on my roughness to the Baron, from which I understood that the latter had complained to Ricardos, and threatened my punishment unless I supplicated pardon. Reproofs on this topic I could not well digest; so, in answer to the prejudiced account my father had received, I told the fact accurately as it was; concluding with expressions of contempt for the denunciations of revenge, and of disdain for the bare thought of being a suitor for pardon. My father then admitted that the circumstance assumed a different aspect; and, convinced of my obstinacy, forbore all further persuasion to submit: although he observed, that the Baron being left an orphan in his youngest days had, by never meeting counteraction of his will, but the contrary from his servile tutors and dependants, acquired so extravagant an idea of his commands being indisputable, that it was to be apprehended we should suf-

fer some heavy proof of his resentment. In this forebodement Ricardos was agreeably deceived: the blow and its inflictor seemed forgotten alike; and the wiles of his pandars to seduce Camilla from the house only betokened any concern about its inhabitants. As they increased in repetition and profligacy, I represented them to Ricardos, and protested the only way to put an end to them was my union with Camilla, which only wanted his sanction for its immediate celebration. He stood like one confounded; and when he recovered, began in an uncollected manner to hint our extreme youth and other scruples of opposition, which I eagerly removed. He was for a moment lost in rumination; then taking my hand, in a voice of tenderness to which I was unaccustomed, he proceeded to express the keenest solicitude for my welfare, which he feared my precipitancy would harm: pointing out the horrors of penury, he appealed to

my heart, fond as it was, whether it could be honorable to wed a woman to beggary: I yet was unable to subsist her, and he had not any property to give me. He reminded me that Camilla was an unclaimed orphan, and recommended patience by promising to find me an employment that could furnish me with the desired independence. For some weeks after this conversation, he continually lamented his unsuccessful endeavours in my behalf; railing against the tyranny of masters, he would instance the Baron, and to inflame me the more, would make contemptuous allusions to the unmanly suppleness of servitude, and ask me in a sarcastic tone, if I were confident in so necessary a pliability of spirit as to kiss the hand that smote me. Once particularly, seeing my lips quiver with indignation, and knowing me to be half desperate at the darkness of my prospects, he drew me to the door; the night was set in; so thrusting

a pistol into my hand, he pointed to the road. "That is the way," said he; "if fortune meet you not, liberty will companion you; and a lad of your spirit cannot hesitate to take what his mistress wants, and selfish men deny." This dreadful confirmation of my surmises nearly overpowered my faculties; but, yet unwilling to give it full credit, I tremblingly drew the trigger: as the piece discharged, and the bullet shivered a flower jar that stood beside the palisade, I was convinced of its deadly purpose, and cast from me the murderous instrument. I turned into the house, and flung myself along a bench: Ricardos followed me, and pushed to the door. His countenance was virulent, his gesticulation furious; and I shrunk at the sight of a half-drawn dagger. Such fear was foolish; for after sitting a while he sprang up, and commanding me never to utter syllable explanatory of what was passed, left the room. This injunction

was scrupulously obeyed, for I had not the slightest wish to reveal the frailties of my parent; wherefore I suffered Camilla to remain in ignorance of his principles who sheltered her. As his behavior now seemed to lose much of its former asperity, it impressed me with an increasing pity for a mind so torn by cruel deceits, and debauched from righteousness and quietude. I knew him to be unhappy, so improved in attention.

It appeared that gentleness was not wasted on him, for some mornings being past, he entered my chamber before I was up, and desired me to dress in haste; telling me, that as the opportunity so long sought by my industry then offered itself, my immediate departure was necessary; wherefore he thought it imprudent to discompose Camilla by leaving-taking, as doubtless I could see her in a few days. Persuaded by his reasoning, I drew on my cloaths in silence; descended the stairs, and followed him

through the village. We passed over a tract of country with which I was the least acquainted, till, as we mounted a hill, I murmured at the length of the walk; but, when we attained the summit, my father comforted me by directing my eyes across the interjacent vale to a gentle eminence, on which was reared an antique castle, the extensive walls of which encroached on the northernmost waters of the lake de Garda. He told me it was the residence of the noble Conte di Fiascano, to whose service he had got me recommended. We passed the great gates and rung at a lodge on the interior side of a spacious court: when the porter came forth, he was desired to acquaint his lord that we waited his leisure; in a couple of minutes the man returned, ordered us to follow, and led the way to a rich saloon, where he directed us to abide his master's return from matins. I hardly found time to notice the surrounding objects, of which

wearisome before! how wild were my transports to meet Camilla again! So ungovernable was my joy that I with difficulty collected sufficient reason to inquire about the Baron: she answered me that his deportment was changed to such guarded respect, that when they met upon the green, a single refusal to his offered hand secured her from farther impertinence. The coming in of Ricardos disagreeably interrupted our discourse: he seemed very glad to see me, yet surveyed me in a manner as though he thought to scrutinize my heart: he congratulated me on my condition, but seemed to distrust my profession of a complete satisfaction: then advising me to return with celerity as the evening darkened, I bade farewell, and hastened back. I continued to pass a pleasant life in the castle, for as they thought I possessed a great share of the young Contessa's favour, the other domestics treated me with a flattering respect. They pro-

bably were not mistaken in this conceit, for I early began to surmise that Larina was far from free from the imperfections of her sex. Her shining eyes and complexional transitions I could not but observe; they betrayed the ardour of her disposition; and I often detected myself reflecting looks of sympathy unbecoming the lover of Camilla. Truth to say, this visionary partiality threw me into a delirium of vanity; and my fervent imagination overleapt the actually impassable distance between her rank and mine. The visits to the cottage I still continued to pay, but with lengthened intervals, for the coldness of my reception much abated my willingness to make them. Camilla gradually discontinued the manifestations of affections, and though her cheeks tinged with a blush, her tongue ceased to greet me in the accents of delight. She so studiously avoided any mention of the Baron, that I learned from my father, (who com-

pointed downwards to its victim, just as I came up, and skreened by the darkness, felled him to the ground with my walking staff: I then stooped, and having wrenched the weapon from his hand, would have buried it in his body, had not the wretch intreated mercy. My arm was petrified; and the steel dropped on the earth innocent of my father's blood. Mercy be found, for retribution from a son just heaven would have shuddered at: provident for his escape, I turned to the Cavalier, whom I perceived to be no other than the Conte, and supported him in silence to his chamber. As I knew pursuit to be then in vain, I disguised the torture of my feelings, and received the caresses of the infatuating Larina, who shook off all reserve in bestowing them on him whom she called the twofold deliverer of her father. The arts of this wanton girl inflamed me the more every day, and evidently encouraged me in the conquest of whatever


diffidence I might entertain: they were somewhat effective in diverting a low spiritedness which often damped me, and which, I suppose, she remarked generally to succeed my absences, for I could find no other reason that she should restrict them: but this deprivation I bore with great patience, for her kind condescension contrasted with the reserve of Camilla, threw the latter into a very unfavorable view. Yet all her arts could not so entirely absorb my heart as to finish its throbbings for Camilla: being apprehensive of her safety with such a man as Ricardos, and especially desirous to know if he had recognized my person as I had his, I solicited and obtained a dispensation from the Contessa, whose eyes kindled with anger as I left her presence. As I passed through the garden that was before my father's house, I noticed that he quitted the room so soon as he saw me through the lattice; an action that left me not to

doubt my discovery on that fatal evening; and when I entered the apartment, I found only Camilla, who was perfecting some designs from nature with accurate elegance. After our first salutations, I began in an airy style to compliment her on her proficiency; but this was quickly checked by the information that they were preparing for presentation to the Baron. My blood heated within me as she uttered this in a tone of gaiety similar to that wherewith I had accosted her; nor was I at all calmed with the subsequent understanding, that Ricardos being obliged to him in numerous instances, suggested this mode of gratitude. That he would have any dealings with him I hated, filled me with exasperation, but that Camilla in consequence could be so employed, wrought in me suspicions of treachery; and in my eagerness to warn her, I touched on all those circumstances as yet unmentioned: her countenance was strongly marked with

disbelief and disgust, and when I ceased, she candidly avowed her abhorrence of that she miscalled my perfidy, in endeavouring to prejudice her against the man on whom she depended. Recriminations were loudly dealt; infidelity on both sides was charged and credited; and in the severest moments of passion we parted.

No sooner did I set foot within the castle, than I was told by the exulting servants that many robbers were just brought in. The Conte imagining his life to be attempted by a common stabber, had issued orders for the strict pursuit of those banditti that infested his estate; and the alacrity of his retainers had now surprized a considerable number, among whom was a man supposed from his imperious air and portly figure to be the captain. He was conducted to a particular confinement; but the commoners were ironed in one dungeon. On the succeeding day, when the Conte

heard of his noble appearance, and of his singular caution in the concealment of his face, which he enveloped in the folds of his garment, he determined to examine him personally, and dispatched men to the prison in order to bring him forth. The robber was at first obstinate in his refusal to obey, till being assured of a private conference, he allowed himself to be conducted to the Conte, with whom he was chambered for some hours. What passed between them no one could tell; but the immediate consequences were unexpected and amazing: all the prisoners were set at freedom; others, shortly after captured, were likewise released, and suffered to remain at large in the castle; while their leader was entertained in apartments contiguous to those of the Conte, which never were entered by the serving-men but from absolute necessity, and then in the absence of their tenant. While perplexing my head with surmises on this strange conduct,



it became less mysterious. I was chosen to accompany the Conte, who spent whole days with the robber, and to wait on them at table; but though burning with curiosity to see the face of the latter, I constantly was disappointed by the largeness of a hat he wore. During the time I remained, their conversation was either undervoiced, or discontinued; yet once the stranger was off his guard; for while speaking in favour of some project, he insisted on its success with great vehemence, and instanced the low born and bred Sforzas, who, from common condottieri, had elevated themselves to the ducal crown of Milan. Other speeches of the like tendency, backed by the proceedings in the castle, which was crowded by strange uncouth men, who employed themselves in strengthening the walls, repairing their breaches, deepening the moat, and similar works, confirmed me in my suspicion that the Conte, by nature wild and adventurous, was about

to undertake some independent warfare: from the unusual thoughtfulness of the Contessa, I imagined that she had conceived a like suspicion; but I was mistaken.

My custom was to walk, in the cool preceding night, throughout the gardens which communicated to the house: they were pleasant and extensive, divided by various paths, many of which were but little frequented: down one of them (the most private) I was strolling wrapt in reverie, and while I myself was unseen through the arborous obscurity, I met Larina encompassed by the arm of the Stranger, on whose shoulder her head reclined: he was whispering something into her ear unintelligible to me, but of which her giddy laugh testified her own understanding and approbance. This unthought of spectacle completely awoke me from the vain dream long so cruelly deceptive; and I regretted that the charms of so unsteady a woman could

have influenced my conduct to Camilla; which I was now assured they really did, however I might attempt to disguise the truth unto myself. Scarcely found I time to make this reflection ere I was jostled by the Conte, who pursued the same walk that I was quitting. Fearful that he might chance to behold what was so debasing to his honour, I attempted to prevent his proceeding: but my manner, uncollected I suppose, surprised him, for with a certain keenness in his looks he broke from me and went on. I was not gone more than twenty paces before again he darted past me, and striking my arm, commanded me to follow him to his apartment. Clapping to the door, he, with furious accents and invective language, began to revile me for a traitor in abetting an opprobrious commerce betwixt the robber and his daughter. The most forcible protestations of my innocence were ineffectual in softening him, so that in-

dignant at such obduracy, I declared that, injuriously and unjust as he behaved, I would leave the castle and his service.

A thorough contempt for my declaration was pretty visible in his countenance; the bounds to the castle were those to my freedom he said, and bestowed on me the title of Slave! My passions were so inflamed that I raised my arm in the act to strike, but his additional words turned me into stone: my father, he said, as such had sold me to him; and he bade me to be warned, that the violation of a master's person by a purchased servant was inexpressible by less than death. Worse than thunderstruck by this horrific discovery, I staggered from him; and prone along the flooring of my chamber, passed the night in deepest anguish.

Next morning I found the castle rid of the robber and his horde, who had departed early; and nothing remarkable happened for a few days, during which

time an equal dejection gloomed the Contessa and myself, though far different its motives! About a week after their dismissal she entered my room; and first extorting from me an oath of secrecy, gave to my hand a letter, requiring its quick delivery to him whom she denominated her adored Julian! who, she said, was in the village whence I came. Seeing me hesitate to undertake this commission, she assailed me with every artful intreaty; but when she found me still inexorable, her native haughtiness arose, and leaving me with a dignified air, she said, as I heeded not her request, it was her command. Obedience from motives of attachment or interest it may be supposed that I was not inclined to show: far from it! other principles swayed me when I carefully concealed the paper from the Conte, who a minute afterwards entered. His passions were cooled by a consideration of the services I formerly had rendered him, and he


saluted me with a tender affability: after some preluding conversation he spoke to me in confidence about his daughter. A sense of honour, which I have since thought culpable, prevented me from imparting to that parent, the further undutifulness of a child, whose opening imperfections wrung his heart: I considered that the trust a mistress reposed in a chosen servant could not be honestly betrayed; so no sooner was I at liberty, than I committed the letter to a peasant boy, who set off for the village. Larina's transports at my behaviour were girlish to an absurd extreme, but I declined with disgust the tenders of her munificence. Indeed, the sufferings of the father, who now spoke to me of them with openness, touched me with remorse for my compliant weakness: of one of our conversations the topic became the sale of my liberty; he desired to hear my story; after listening to it with great attention, he professed himself to be so

enraged at the treachery of my unnatural parent, by whom he had been much deceived, and interested for my prosperity, that he proposed to free me from all engagements of vassalage, and to portion Camilla for marriage. This un-hoped-for generosity made me half mad; and so far my gratitude overstepped prudence, that I revealed to him the disobedience of his daughter. Alarmed for the honour of his house, yet distractedly fond of the degenerate girl, he besought me to note her actions, and faithfully report them to him. This was an employment I could not do otherwise than refuse; but I tendered my services in any other capacity. He accepted my apology, but ceased to speak on that subject, and as I afterwards found, appointed spies about the castle. For on a certain day which followed quickly, a day of all that I ever have known the most eventful,—and see, my friend, the mere remembrance blanches my cheeks, towards

evening I was pacing about the marble hall which opened to the gardens; Larina, who at dinner scarcely ate, and appeared much disturbed, having early dismissed me. The place was friendly to meditation; and the rays of the declining sun darting through the painted windows, checquered the pavement with the waving shadows of the tall trees by which they were intercepted: then I was contemplating, when a whispering engaged my attention. I looked up to a gallery that ran along three sides of the hall, and beheld the Conte earnestly attentive to one of the men who acted as spies, and who repeatedly pointed towards some object in the gardens. In the next moment they parted. The Conte came down by a flight of stone steps into the hall; his gait was unequal, and without seeing me, he turned into a private armory at the upper end. I heard him cast down various pieces of armour, and saw him

speedily come forth with an unsheathed sword in his hand; he went with hasty steps towards the garden gate, his lips quivered, his bosom heaved, and passing his eyes along the steel, his cheeks crimsoned with indignation at sight of a tear, which had trickled down them and which shone on the blade: he dashed the ignoble moisture away. That action alarmed me, and kindly stepping forward, I detained him by the garment. Ignorant who was the intruder, he at first attempted to strike me; but looking in my face, he bade me begone. I urged my affectionate solicitude for his security; he softened and leant on my shoulder, weak with inward struggles; with a choaked voice he then told me, that in that moment the caitiff Julian was with Larina. The shock I received, and which my aspect exhibited, aroused his dosing revenge: trembling with rage he rushed from me, who followed unchecked, because unregarded.

After a multiplicity of turnings and windings, we struck into a long vista, which brought us to a beautiful summer-house, profusely decorated in every fashion grateful to the senses : a few steps promoted us through the vestibule; the door was ajar; all was still as night: he entered; I kept closely behind him; but the loudness of my respiration, struggling as I was for breath, brought him to a consciousness of my accompaniment; he started, his pallid features I can never forget; they appeared convulsed. I can dispense with this over-care, said he; then preventing my step, the frailties of the daughter of Maurice di Fiascano must not be revealed to public gaze : a sigh, which he attempted to suppress, forced its passage; but unwilling that it should be remarked, he looked at me, alas, I feared not that it was for the last time! and disappeared through an opening at the farther end. I stood rivetted to the spot, scarcely



breathing, lest the slightest murmur might escape me; my eyes stedfastly bent on an interior room, through which the Count had crossed; but the gloom occasioned by the plants being thickly arranged before the windows, prevented a distinct perception of any object. A confusion of voices arose within: that of the Count was distinguishable. I gently crept along the sides anxiously curious: the noise ceased; I stopped to hearken. Quick footsteps advanced, and the robber rushed down in confusion towards me; he was unarmed, and I placed myself before him. His features, for the first time before me, were unshaded; his eyes were inflamed by meaning; and they discharged glances so terrible, that I shrunk from him in dismay. Wonder not, Henri! you, my friend! were frozen by the magic of his orbs: in those of our host you beheld the spirit of the robber, Julian. He hastily passed me, leapt through the

outlet, and mounted a terrace, which overlooked the wall at a little distance: he drew from his pocket a horn, and sounded it loud and long; thrice he repeated the blast, till after the third time an uncustomary uproar sprang in and about the castle. It gathered in every quarter: the servants ran through the gardens; their cry was for their master; but he answered not. An unaccountable panic seized me: I began to run, and once off, increasing terror winged me: I found the courts deserted; but I distinctly heard the clashing of swords, and, with intervals, the discharge of fire-arms. The gates were wide open; no guard was on his post save one, who, poor wretch! grovelling in his own blood, and writhing through agony, half overhung the moat from the draw-bridge, which was down. This was not an encouraging spectacle; and I quickened my flight, till I espied a band of strangers descending to meet me: I ab-

sconded behind some tall fern, and crouched unobserved, while they passed by; among them I recognized several of the banditti, and heard them call, the one to the other, to make better haste lest they should be too late. They hurried their way, as I did mine. By then I attained the extreme of the opposite hill, I heard a savage shout; looking back I saw that they were at that instant pushing through the portal: my blood curdled, and I proceeded towards the village. The god of day was already sunken below the high-browed hills, when crossing the green, the theatre of my juvenile sports, I saw a considerable number of the peasantry, men, women, and children, in one assemblage: their attire was peculiarly gay, and I puzzled myself to recollect what festival required such celebration. Come to the gate of my father's house, I found the rails decorated with garlands; and within them, several musicians and household officers; all dressed in the

splendid livery of the Baron. I was too much confounded to think; and pushing through them, distraction to my sight! it settled on Camilla, who, bedecked with flowers, and otherwise arrayed as a bride, came forth at that instant, supported between Ricardos and the Baron. The music struck up; its strain was animating, yet her cheeks were colourless: in the bitterness of reproach I threw myself in her way. No sooner could she discover me, than she shook off her company, and flew into my outstretched arms. Though I held her closely, the monsters sundered her from me; and in despite of my utmost efforts bore her, while fainting, down the mountainet. I strove to follow, but the combined strength of all the servants detained me: when they saw their lord securely distant, they unhanded and quitted me; but I hopelessly dashed my body on the earth, and tore up the herbage with my teeth, while my face was scalded by my tears.

In the height of this phrenzy, a voice asked what was my complaint; and a stout man, grasping me with his arms, obliged me to rise. I found myself before several horsemen, one of whom had dismounted to assist me; and there stood among them a Cavalier, distinguished by his own dress and the caparison of his steed. He asked the name of the village: I answered him. He then interrogated, If there dwelt not thereabout a vintager by name Ricardos? I shuddered, and pointed to the house. He seemed agitated, and further asked, If there lived with him a young damsel named ——? Here I interrupted him by sighing Camilla! The same! cried he. She lives, I said, but henceforth lives in wretchedness; for esteemed a friendless orphan, she is now dragged to yonder church to sanctify an obligated match. She no longer is a friendless orphan! shouted the Cavalier, and furiously galloped in the direction I had pointed out.

My heart leapt into my throat! Who is your master? cried I, pulling him by the sleeve who was alighted; Who is your master? Who! said he; why the rich Don Phillippo de Santillana, a noble knight of Calatrava. I screamed for joy; for oh! my friend! I knew him to be Camilla's father. Thrusting myself before my informant, I vaulted into his vacant saddle; gave free rein to the horse, and drove after the Cavalier. He entered the church but a second before me: I threw myself from my courser, and arrived at the altar nearly as soon as himself. He loudly commanded that the ceremony should be stopt: luckily it but just was begun! then singling Camilla from the groupe, he demanded his child, and caught her to his breast. An inconceivable confusion broke through the company: Ricardos reviled him for an impostor; and as he called for rescue, swords on either side were drawn. Don Phillippo's band though triply out-

numbered by their antagonists, withstood their fiercest assaults; and inclosing Camilla and her father, retired towards the entrance: there they began to droop, and, fired at the sight, I rushed along the front of the skirmish. The Baron was among the foremost of the opposite party; with him I grappled; he fell, and I attempted to disarm him; when a violent blow with the pommel of a sword, dealt by the cruel hand of Ricardos, stunned me, and I dropped insensibly across the prostrate body of my rival.

How long a time I remained in that miserable condition I do not exactly know; but when I recovered my senses, I found myself laying on some straw, beneath a shed, some few paces from my father's house. I might have perished in my continuous state of incapability, but for the good offices of a young lad, who alone manifested a sincere partiality to my person. From him I learned that

Camilla, beneath paternal care, was safely borne from the village. I was too magnanimous to wish otherwise what was so advantageous to herself; yet from the poignancy of my anguish a selfish lamentation would break forth, and accuse the severity of my fate, which irrecoverably had deprived me of the only source to future happiness. My strength barely was recruited before my little assistant entered the hovel with much alarm in his countenance, and begged me forthwith to flee. He told me that the Baron, in the intervals of the disorder brought on him by my misuse, had desired that I might be secured; and that Ricardos, enraged by his own disappointment, had undertaken to obey him. At first I thought to stay, and meet my brutal parent; but when I reflected, that his conduct heretofore proved him empty of the feeling to which I wished to appeal, I took my cloke, gave a farewell kiss to the affec-


tionate boy, and bent my steps towards the castle, which I had a faint hope might again be my asylum.

I found a great concourse of vassals, apparently in deep distress, standing about the gates, which were closed; and from the turrets above them huge black flags were hung abroad. I had not made inquiry respecting this dismal preparation ere the doors were widely opened, and through them slowly issued a long train clad in deepest mourning; many of them carrying the banners di Fiascano, wreathed about with cypress: they wound along the walls towards the chapel, which stood detached from the furthest wing. The dolorous tolling of the bell alone disturbed the awful stillness that obtained; until came forth the band of choristers who preceded the bier: they solemnly chanted a requiem to the deceased, whom, horror-struck, I knew to be the unhappy Conte, as the unfilial Larina successively followed, be-

ing led by her merciless paramour: She wore a thick veil that enshrouded her from head to foot; therefore though I much desired to see her face I could not; but her walk was so firm, that I shuddered to think what scenes her mind must have undergone, to be hardened to such collection on so sorrowful an occasion. The vassals could not longer contain their grief, when they beheld the sad remains of a beneficent master; but to my surprize, their bewailings were unmingled with execrations against his destroyers. I found it to be given out, that in one of his passionate fits the bursting of a blood vessel had brought on his immediate death: I likewise understood, that the cunning Contessa reported herself to have been for some time the private wife of Julian, and that she impatiently awaited the fulfilment of those obsequies, to make a public solemnization of her nuptials. The falsity of her latter declaration moved me to

discredit the former; though I must own it to be probable, as the Conte was irritable even to frenzy, to which he might be particularly wrought by the discovery of his daughter's derogatory marriage, as was the report: yet so strong was my animosity against the ungrateful pair, that I trembled to behold them, and conceited the holy ground to be profaned by their presence. Turning from the walls, I extricated myself from the throng and wandered into the country: my eyes overwhelmed with tears when I heard the many-toned organ swell to elegiac verse, and reflected that that funeral ceremony was performed for him whose demise left me without a friend. I had no where to shelter my head, my father's persecution arming all against me; so with a nearly broken heart I quitted the territories di Fiascano. At length I determined to seek employment in the military service: all Italy was then in arms; and my robust youth procured

me a favorable engagement. The following campaign was the fiercest during the whole war: I achieved actions that were reckoned meritorious, and before its close I found myself promoted to a command over the corsés of my superiors. The corps, to which I belonged, was directed to oppose a body of Gallic troops: unable to make head against us in the open field, they aimed at a retreat: pursuit changed it to a flight; and we spread ourselves about the country to preserve it from their ravages. My troop being detached in advance, accidentally came to the gates of a villa, which the enemy's marauders were attempting to pillage. We drove them from the spoil, and while my followers were binding their hands behind their backs, I entered the house: a piteous shrieking assailed my ears; I ascended the stairs, and rushed into an apartment, where I beheld a Cavalier struggling in the arms of two Gauls, whose



comrades were rudely dragging a swooning female through an opposite door. Overcome by superior strength, the Cavalier was drooping through fatigue, and a pistol was pointed towards his head just as I leapt forward, and dismembered the arm of the wretch who held it: I then ran to rescue the lady, from whom the miscreants fled, and with transports indescribable, Camilla was caught to my breast. Don Philippo, whom I recognized in the Cavalier, was ceaseless in expressions of gratitude; he embraced me as the preserver of his darling child, and entreated me to make his abode my own residence. My duty being relaxed by the lateness of the season, I accepted the invitation with joy; and once more felicitated myself on being with Camilla beneath the same roof.

The diligence of the father left little for his daughter to add to my entertainment, yet that little she performed with unnatural awkwardness. Indeed, she no

longer was the brisk sanguine girl I before knew her to be: her extreme gaiety was allayed by a languor which retarded every look and gesture; yet was she lovely as man could wish, and when in her society, my breast was torn by conflicting feelings. Scrupulous of the slightest violation of such generous hospitality, I behaved to her with a general politeness; attempted not particular assiduity; and cautiously avoided any opportunity that could possibly induce me to discourse on our former passion. This refrainment became in the end so difficult, that I grew sensible that flight only could preserve my honour: determined to forsake the house, I announced my departure to my noble host, and with abundance of thanks to his courtesy, professed that it was my intention presently to rejoin the army. His surprize at this resolution was very great; and after revolving within himself for a minute or two, he required in an undeniable man-

ner my further stay for a week, adding, If my own heart then wished it, he would not oppose my departure. His secret meaning, which I vainly strove to penetrate, was disclosed within the allotted time; for as we were sauntering about the court, conversing on topics worthy only to alleviate the hour, he abruptly digressed from the subject on which we then were speaking, and told me, that he was perfectly aware of every circumstance relative to the condition, from which his providential arrival had delivered Camilla. Seeing me shrink from his scrutinizing looks with empurpled cheeks, he dismissed all ambiguity on his own part, and in an encouraging tone demanded, if my affection for the untitled Camilla were abated or effaced, now that I found her the acknowledged heiress of the family de Santillana? I was at first confounded by this question, because I was ignorant of its tendency; but as I recovered assurance, I

frankly explained the genuine state of my heart, together with the principles which had influenced that coldness of respect I had showed to her I doted on, and which were about to bear me from a family I would not disgrace by my presumption. Hardly would he suffer me to make an end, before he cast his arms about my neck, and hugged me with more than cordiality; declaring how infinitely he was delighted by my confession: Camilla, cried he, proves by every action how stubbornly her affections centre in you: the poor girl is positively lovesick: go, declare to her that which you have to me: hitherto I feared the object of her inclinations to be unworthy them; this moment convicts my mistake; and I now with joy sanction your addresses to my daughter.

Instantly I obeyed him, and flew to the chamber of Camilla. Mutual explanations renovated our past confidence. The perfidy of my father, which had

possessed her with ideas of my inconstancy, was detected; and she entreated me to forgive the unreasonableness of that pride and resentment, which had so nearly insnared her in to marriage with the Baron. That was not a time for obduracy; and Don Philipppo coming in, we prostrated ourselves at his feet. The more I saw of this noble man, the more I found to reverence and esteem. Frail in his youth, consequently a taster of adversity, by feeling he had learned to feel: with manners as a souldier frank, with a heart as woman's soft, age in him shone admirable; far from circumscribing the munificence of younger days, its prudence now directed it: in gaining riches he had gained lessons how to apply them. As he for long had been a witness, on the newly known continent of America, to the awful spectacle of captived monarchs and butchered princes, he understood the fallibility of human grandeur; and soaring beyond

the narrow policies of surrounding nobles, bestowed his daughter on him she affected, though base in birth, uncertain in fortune. I was a soldier, he said; and a fit companion for the highest born, who were my brethren in arms: his family neither was very ancient or dignified; valour had promoted it to account; by valour it must be sustained, and the admission of a member so qualified was honorary not debasing. Yet for reasons I need not recapitulate, he besought me to assume his name; and of my own ashamed, I willingly complied. In the transports of successful love, unmingled with other sensation than gratitude, the hours past preceding that appointed for our union.

The day at length came round: it opened, oh! a day of ecstasy; but closed in a night, ah! a night of horror: the intervening minutes blasted every hope. As Camilla was walking unattended through the gardens of the villa, which

bordered on the sea, she was surprized by a crew of piratical Algerines. The absence of the bride discovered unto us her hapless fate; we only arrived on the spot to see the impossibility of successful chace, as the white sails of the accursed galley were dwindled to a speck on the horizon.

CHAPTER III.

In vain we brave, now none shall teach us fear,
 Unless he teach that God preside nor here ;
 Hark ! midnight tolls ; straight all the senses lie,
 Bereft of reason in wild anarchy :
 The while are bleeding conscientious wounds,
 Brigands and sprights revolve their gastly rounds.
 Oh ! speak thy kind with whom I now commune,
 May steel thee pierce, and faggots thee absume ?
 Colossal thy stature, uneath thy strides,
 The antique fabric shivering divides,
 Celestial, or Fiend, speak ! I'll hear thy birth !
 Ha ! Fiend, too truly, though thou lookest of earth !

THE recital of this sad story so over-
 came the unhappy relater, that, at this
 period, he drooped his head, and de-
 clined upon the couch, unable to proceed.
 Henri was so wrapt in wonder by the
 vicissitudes of his friend's fortune, that
 for some moments he stupidly sate in-
 attentive to his present sufferings: at

length he assuaged their violence, reiterated assurances of everlasting attachment, and drew him to his breast: whether his recent discovery of Claudio's base origin increased or diminished the gracefulness of this conduct, there was no uninterested witness to ascertain.

“ From that morning,” said the Italian, his sobs quarrelling with his words, “ from that fatal morning, unlightened sorrow hath oppressed me: till then I lost not hope; thenceforward it constantly hath flown me. I have been but half a man; a mere automaton, made to act by the will, guidance, or enforcement of others. No affection have I had, save for peril, no appetite, save for slaughter: unnatural depravations! engendered by a mind so harassed by its intrinsic woes, that I dare not turn my eyes inward lest they behold what can dim them with lamentation; but I flee the hour of leisure even as I would my chief enemy, and seek the

busiest scene, not for comfort, but relief."

The Chevalier too often had heard of misfortune's fitful insanity to be confounded by its present symptoms in Claudio: complaisant to the wild tenor of his speech, he reprov'd it not, but mingling his tears with those of the utterer, soothed him to composure. Henri, after several apposite observations, inquired of Claudio, how long was the interval since his sufferance of the last miserable stroke, and his present relation of it?

"The year but three times hath come round," answered the Cavalier; "but to me it hath seem'd twenty times its natural length: and often I have heard the wretched father declare, that the few remaining seasons his age could expect to endure, seem'd an eternity to his careworn mind. The loss of Camilla sunk him on a sick bed, where for many weeks his life was in imminent dan-

ger: he very slowly shook off the infirmities of illness, and though grieved to the heart myself, I was obliged to dissemble resignation when attending him. His kindness to me rather was confirmed than weakened, yet did I much fear that my presence was painful to him by reviving most poignantly the unhappy fate of his daughter; and solitude becoming intolerable to myself, I broke from my benefactor, and went to the army. The name de Santillana, by which I was distinguished, was accompanied by the interest of its worthy bestower; so that, were ambition my passion, there was sufficient encouragement for it. But my thoughts were prepossessed, wherefore I was incapable as a babe to aggrandize myself in the world: of my blood I was as prodigal as soldiers can be, but my talents as an officer were crushed beneath the weight of my cares. Where service was to be found I sought it: the ceremonious

battle, forlorn assault, projected ambushment, or accidental skirmish; all of these, possibility permitted, I entered, and many a man found cause to bewail the intemperance of that courage, deliberate conduct shuddered at, and condemned. During the times of cessation I often revisited the abode of my patron, in whom I was shocked to trace the signs of decay, too visible on his person. As hostilities dropped in Italy, I found myself at liberty, and spent some months with him: but the habitation of my mistress empoisoning every moment with sad remembrance, and additionally dissatisfied with inactivity, I quitted Don Philipppo to become a volunteer under the Marquis del Guasto, who was assembling a large but promiscuous army, at the head of which he hoped to rout your countrymen from Piedmont, and run a career of victorious invasion through the neighbouring provinces of France. His success Europe

knows, and how the homicide imbeciled the soldier. For me, disdainful of the signal to retreat, I obeyed slowly, until a vagrant shot struck and shattered my horse. It was a lucky circumstance I since have thought, for it gave me to the hands of Henri."

The friends sat silently for some minutes. "But with regard to this stranger?" at length said the Chevalier.

"Truly," adjoined Claudio, "I hope that I have justified my behaviour to the stranger, though you, in generous confidence, accused it not."

"And do you stedfastly believe that he and Julian are the same?" asked Henri.

"My memory is fallacious indeed if he be not," replied Claudio. "My life on it, their birth was not double."

"His is not a countenance easily to be forgotten," observed the Chevalier; "still what staggers my credit is his entire ignorance of yourself."

“Alas! that is not surprising!” returned Claudio. “Four years are gone by since that adventure, and by them so differently I am changed, that were I now to encounter those who knew me in my juvenile day, the world to a ducat they could not recognize me. Besides, but once did our eyes ever meet, and then in twilight; so that the artifice of names keeps him unconscious of whom is his guest.”

“Yours is a mournful history,” said Henri, “and wonderful in what respects this mysterious man. Then what you disregard, but I with blended terror and astonishment behold, is that”—[pointing to the head of the bed] “Could this chateau ever belong to the estate which we this evening visited? My ancestors resided on it, and my father occasionally passed there the summer months. It is true, that I never heard mention either of this building, or of the forest wherein it stands re-

tired, save to warn me from the latter as a place abominable and accursed."

"Was the Marquis ever in Italy?"

Claudio asked, after a minute's musing.

"Not since my birth," answered the Chevalier; "not for twenty years. In his youth he was a soldier and a libertine; characters, they say, that generally associate; but, though Italy was the theatre of the war in which he commanded, he always was loth to speak about it; and when I have questioned of the circumstance of battle, he seldom chose to satisfy me. Of late he has lived particularly recluse; yet, for some time preceding my departure, couriers repeatedly arrived at the chateau: more than ordinary or even reasonable care was shewn in their accommodation; so that had I been unassisted by casualties, all my inquiries had failed to ascertain that they came from some part of Italy."

"I perceive," said Claudio, "that your brain is fantasied with ideas of some secret connexion between your father and this man."

"You charge my thoughts with what I hardly dare confess they bear," rejoined Henri: "yet will I own myself to be distracted by surmises, extravagant perhaps, but not devoid of reason. The conduct of my father of latter years has amazingly been changed."

"The natural effect of age and infirmity," observed Claudio.

"The former is too new to him," said the Chevalier, "to bring much of the latter: infirmities moral rather than physical influence his actions."

"The less likely to continue," argued Claudio. "Caprice, passion, or a thousand other weaknesses, may occasion what your misapprehension ascribes to more serious causes."

"I fear not," continued Henri: "All

his dependants see the alteration, and all I have found unanimous in attributing it to an extraordinary visit once made him by an unknown man. It must now be nearly five years ago. No inmate of the chateau knew him; he disregarded all ceremony, and unannounced entered my father's cabinet. Their interview was long, but secret; and the stranger returned mysteriously as he came. I saw him stride across the court, but unfortunately his back was turned; he sprang upon a fiery courser, and in an instant vanished."

"And have you never found clue to guide you to his detection?" asked Claudio.

"Never!" answered the Chevalier; "though each ensuing day kindled fresh wonder at the effects of his coming. I then first certified that the Marquis had a natural son, resident not many miles from the chateau. Most

solicitous search was made for this young man; it was successful; and the countenance of the Marquis lost every vestige of hope. The black melancholy that came over him surprized me the more, because this boy could not have been a favourite. I had seen him more than once, and persuaded against our relationship, I had mocked him for his deformity."

"But the conduct of your father towards yourself?" said the Italian.

"Was cautiously kind," answered Henri. "For many months succeeding this incident, he would not suffer me to go beyond the walls unguarded: this strictness abated in time; for, shut up in his innermost chamber, he became inattentive to all domestic concerns. The couriers I have mentioned, only penetrated his privacy; and, when my resolution to enter the army extorted his permission, his past care only re-

vived in that awful injunction so unintentionally disobeyed."

"I very well understand the drift of your suspicions," said the Italian. "You persuade yourself, and fain would me, that that dubious stranger occasioned your parent's first caution, the remains whereof was this injunction; which sole purport was to prevent your meeting with its original causer in the person of our host."

"The exact analysis of my ideas," cried Henri. "I tremble to think whose habitation I am in. Can its master, Julian; and the stranger; be one? If it be possible for such a character to exist, what is not to be dreaded from it? This chamber may be our prison; perhaps worse! its defenceless spaciousness best adapts it to deeds of force. And feel my arm, Claudio! this is not infirmity of fear, for my flesh crawls as though conscious of impending evil."

“ Rather the consequence of cold,” said the Italian; but his imperfect accents, and unsettled eyes, manifested him to be somewhat infected by his friend’s apprehension. To disguise his real feelings, he remarked on the night being almost consumed, and walked to the windows. Without, all was pitchy dark; within, they were little better; for their lamp, quivering in its socket, gleamed by inconstant fits along the sides of the apartment. A vivid flash, being reflected by the coloured glass, dazzled the sight of Claudio, who turned about: a second, varying alternate light and shade, discovered to him the agitated features of Henri, who gently had followed at his elbow: it shivered, sunk, expired; and the friends mechanically caught each other’s hands. That of the Chevalier was damp and aguish; he essayed to speak, but the words hissed his attempt: Claudio demanded the

cause of his alarm. "Hush!" at length cried Henri: they listened, yet heard nothing. Again the Italian was going to put the question; but Henri pinched his arm: he understood the hint, and in the same moment heard an odd kind of rustling close to where he stood. He was unable to move, so rivetted were his feet to the floor; and many times it was repeated, before he had power to dis- sever his lips. "Who enters?" at length said he. The sound murmured through the room; but, emboldened by his own voice, he placed his hand on his sword; when the noise returned, and the dismal hooting of the night-owl, which flapped its wings against the casements, discovered itself to be the inoffensive cause of their affright. Ashamed of a terror which disgraced him in his own opinion, Claudio rebuked his friend for first giving way to it: he then encouraged him with hopes of a speedy ter-

mination to the night; and prevailed on him, though to the last reluctant, to take repose on the bed; to which, softly stealing, they betook, but were careful not to undress, lest an assault should surprize them unprepared.

Fatigued by his journey, and wearied with a discourse which had lasted three hours, and which, by reviving his misfortunes, most violently had perturbed his mind, Claudio invited the approach of insensibility; and, notwithstanding his prejudices in disfavour of the lodging, soon dropped into a sound slumber. But the influence of dread too deeply was grafted in his bosom, to permit him to rest undisturbed. The simple scene preceding his sleep, broke it, by the aid of a disordered imagination. He imagined that Henri shook him; then started as if spoke to; yet never completely awoke: his dreams were only

interrupted in their evil imagery by something that seemed to realize them.

In the morning when he awoke, he outstretched his limbs to recover them from inert languor; but, throwing his arm across the place Henri had taken, he was surprized to find it vacant. I am a sluggard, cried he; and immediately jumping up, called out to his friend. No answer being returned, he snatched his sword from the bolster, where he had laid it the overnight, but whence he observed that of the Chevalier to be gone. He now felt a degree of alarm, ran to the windows, and threw one of them open. The morning evidently was high advanced, as the fierce rays of the southering sun scorched the topmost branches of the forest, yet could not the meridian daylight enliven

the ambient prospect : a habitation, so raised in the heart of obscurity and sterility, possessed the beholder with natural suspicions of ill tenantry. As Claudio swept his eyes over the rugged asperities of the valley, unproductive of aught but baleful weeds, he whispered to himself, that the appalling effects of such a scene even familiarity could not diminish : 'twas only when the mind were overspread by sympathetic gloom, when darkness within were deeper than external shade, that humanity could look thence unconcerned : he shuddered at the fancy, that they who chose an abode so rude, well were practised in the school of living horrors.

That the Chevalier would go abroad after what had passed, exceedingly surprized him ; and he continued to look abroad, impatient for his return. Chagrined by his long absence, he at length determined to go in search of him ; but,

turning round with this resolution, the sight of Henri's casque, which was laying where the Chevalier himself had placed it, filled him with consternation. Ready to burst with emotion, he rushed to the door ; it was closed, and he staggered many paces backwards, for its fastenings were unmoved, but complete as they had been made the preceding night. Unhappy youth ! sighed he, and smote his forehead ; too just were your forebodings, and vain hath proved all our precaution, for surely he whom we had to deal with, is not of human origin.

At that juncture, came some one to the door ; he knocked, Claudio hesitated ; but with him personal fear ever was slight : withdrawing the barricado, he threw open the door ; the hideous Nicholas entered ; in his hands was a tray with breakfast ; he did not salute

the Cavalier ; but, sulkily as before, placed the tray upon the ground. Claudio silently beheld this proceeding ; a hope stole through his bosom ; it was transient ; for looking downwards, he saw that there was a portion but for one. About to address the old man, the latter left the room, but bequeathed a parting glance so fraught with malignity, that the Italian was startled : he stooped, and emptied the contents of the ewer into the tray ; a white sediment appeared at the bottom ; it was gritty, and palpably of a poisonous quality. Claudio dashed away the deadly victuals, and flew after the treacherous assassin. Nicholas was lingering at the remote end of the corridor ; but seeing the injured Italian approach with fury beaming in his eyes, he slunk from the spot, and disappeared.

Claudio ran with rapidity to the place, and striking wide the entrance,

bounded into the centre of an apartment, and arrested the disgusting fugitive. The wretch screamed a piercing and unequal yell. Claudio half relinquished his hold, for his ears acknowledged its similarity to that, which so frightened his company when they were wandering through the waste; and he no longer doubted it being a signal-howl. He began to shake the miscreant with all his might, and to drag him backwards; but Nicholas fiercely resisted, and only when he felt the naked sword passed along his throat, would he move a foot. Threats of immediate destruction, enforced by gestures consistently violent, drove him along the corridor; and being thrust into the chamber, he fell on the floor.

"Wretch!" said the Italian, "arise, and answer me!" He obeyed with squalid form and haggard aspect; endeavouring to befit his fiend-like eyes

for humble supplication. Claudio shuddered, and spurned him with his heel, saying, "You sought my life."

"I seek it now!" hoarsely spake the monster. His words were no mockeries, for releasing a short dagger from his accursed breast, he sprang forward, with a deadly purport in his descending blow; but Claudio, unshrinking, met the hand; and with an upward stroke so sheer from the arm divided it, that, innocent and unstained, the weapon dropped at his feet. The assassin tore the room with shrieks. Claudio caught up the dagger, and immediately he was possessed by the demon of revenge, for it was Henri's; the blade of demascan temper, and ebon grasp, studded with jewels, were not to be mistaken. "Where obtained you this?" cried the Italian to the sanguinary Nicholas. "Where is Henri; the Chevalier? Speak," continued he, "speak quickly

or never will you again." Moans being his only answer, the Italian was unable any longer to contain himself. "That wound was for my own wrongs," said he, aiming the poniard; "this avenges the wrongs of my friend."

His native virtue was indignant at this unmanly fury over a helpless wretch, and loosing the compassionate sluices of his heart, impelled the chiding blood crimson to his cheek: he felt the generous reproof, and but a momentary slave to passion, proved that indulgence only makes it invincible. He averted the point from its intended victim, and by acting nobly likewise acted prudently, for, quick as thought, ran footsteps along the gallery. Hardly he could find time to replace the barricade at the entry, before it was so forcibly assailed, that part of the fastening fell; and where the pliant door gaped above, an oaken truncheon was introduced to

prevent it reclosing. Not a step from destruction, Claudio applied his shoulder to the pannel, and desperately withstood the fiercest efforts of his adversaries; but shaken with ceaseless violence, the slippery floor deceived his footing, and he half fell: the vacuum becoming wider, down dropped the loosened staff; quick as lightning Claudio drew it through: thus an accident of such apparent danger, was beneficial in the issue, as nothing now prevented his complete exclusion of the assailants, who suddenly surceased.

Though Claudio was unattacked, he continued to push with all his might, until disturbed by a noise in the room, he noticed that Nicholas having raised a part of the tapestry, was kicking against a part of the wall, which returned a hollow sound. Not doubting of a private outlet, the Italian flew to prevent his escape; but before he could

arrive, the caitiff fled, and Claudio pursued him. They entered a darksome chamber of limited dimensions; Nicholas sped towards a door in the farther end; a key grated in its lock, and several bravoës with drawn swords rushed forward. Claudio recoiled from so numerous a band of combatants, and, whirling his steel with undirected velocity, attempted to retard their pressure; but unequal to longer contention, he gave way, and retreated to the apartment whence he recently had issued. They followed, disallowing him the respite of a second, for the foremost bravo already touched his arm: Claudio turned on his heel, and swung himself about, but whether he were released by the infliction of a wound on his detainer, or by his own impetuous struggles, it was impossible in that tumult to ascertain: however, finding his arm at liberty, he threw a chair in the way of his pursuers, and vaulted

through the open casement over a balcony on a wide rampart : running to its edge to precipitate himself, his resolution shrunk, for although the wall were not extremest in altitude, yet the downward leap was perilous. As the noise increased behind him, he looked backwards, and saw the window thronged with faces : in the succeeding instant a bullet whistled past his head ; dreading a second salute, he crouched and ran along the brink ; when come to a decayed buttress, he scrambled down, and leaped on the earth unhurt.

Where he alighted was an opposite quarter to that wherein stood the chief gate, whitherto he immediately sped, hoping thence to retrace the way to the forest. He was at no great distance from the front of the mansion, when three or four horsemen galloped from the portal : the irregularities of the ground greatly befriended him, but when he reached the steep bank, descended the

night before, daylight disclosed obstacles insurmountable by other than the desperate. In that class was the Italian, for sticking his dagger in the earth up to its very haft, he trusted his life to its tenacity; and dragged his body up the precipices, until he attained a narrow standing place near the summit. When accompanied by Henri he had not attempted that part, the path he now made never yet being trodden by human foot; and his brain grew giddy with a downward prospect of many fathoms perpendicular, unrelieved to the sight by weedy or rocky projection: but for the fissures in the rock behind, this station were untenable: in one of them he thrust his arm, and bent beneath the impending brow of the extreme, the last and mightiest test of his intrepidity. A tree, that overgrew the brink above, and inclined near to him, was the only aid that offered; boldly leaping from the friendly cleft, he caught

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at it with either hand. Pendent by the flexible boughs, he waved in mid-air to and fro; till straining all his spirits to one great exertion, he upwards sprung, and lodged his feet most happily on the height, which with many struggles he safely gained.

Looking about him, he noted the horsemen to be furiously riding up the road, which fortunately lengthened their progress. With the utmost eagerness to win the heart of the forest, he ran up the chief vista; but the pursuers gained on him, for he heard them shout with increased loudness. Breathless with fatigue, and hopeless of deliverance, he was about to stand at bay, when the neighing of a horse close at hand, reminded him of the one left by Henri. Quickly casting his eyes around, he perceived its high neck above the thicket: he sprung on the sprightly courser, loosed the bridle from the bough, and rode into the thickest part of the forest.

In despite of the closely woven branches and entangled underwood, he dashed onwards, till he came to a part less crowded with impediments: there he stopped to listen. Secure of escape, his heart bounded high with gratitude to Heaven, and hugging the unconscious instrument of his preservation, he then proceeded.

He soon found himself on the skirts of the forest, for the trees, more thinly grouped, admitted some perspective of the neighbouring country: at length, having entirely cleared it, he perceived a neat cottage on the margin of a wide impetuous river. He reined his horse towards that cottage. A man, seated on a bench beside the door, arose at his approach, and stedfastly regarded him: he then ran to meet him, and embracing his knees, discovered to Claudio his Squire Ercolani. The gladness was mutual, and the Cavalier, exhausted by his adventures, desired that a glass of wine

should be brought. A paysanne came out with a flask, being followed by several children, who rather started at the appearance of Claudio, whose handsome figure was frightfully bespattered with dirt, and ensanguined with the blood of Nicholas. Liberal payment dissipated their apprehensions. Having cleansed his habit as well as was then possible, the Cavalier commanded Ercolani to inquire the distance thence of the town, which so erroneously they had sought last night. The woman said that it was full three hours journey, and advised them to attend to the borders of the river. Ercolani then withdrew his horse from a shed, attached to the cot, and pursued his master in the track recommended.

The crystal expanse of waters, glistening beneath a noontide sun, could not be viewed by an undazzled sight: the country before them was, according to its various tilth, distributed into

every diversity of colours, which, mel-
lowed by the distance, were at further-
most blended into one indiscriminate die
of blue; but these were prospects too
gay to the Cavalier in his present melan-
choly, and he averted his eyes to the
black frowning forest. Ercolani, seeing
him look back, imagined that his attend-
ance were required, and rode up to his
master: Claudio was roused to recollec-
tion, and he inquired of Ercolani, What
were his fortunes after their unlucky
separation in the woody labyrinth?

“ Ah, Signor!” said the Squire, who,
like many a lowly son of nature, loved a
little loquacity in his heart: “ Ah, Sig-
nor, that was a bitter mistake, and, by
those most holy in the saintly kalendar!
no more my fault than the fault of my
horse. Master Pierre deserves the total
blame, and verily he did enough to me-
rit what I don’t choose to speak, but
what you, Signor, may easily guess.”
Here Ercolani, suspecting that his mas-

ter's tardiness of comprehension might be ascribed to his own deficiency in expression, illustrated the latter with such forceful gestures about the crupper of his steed, as made that suffering representative of Pierre exceedingly indignant at so unusual a mistreatment; accordingly, poor Ercolani nearly was shaken out of his saddle.

Having regained his seat, he went on. "Far be it from me to prejudice you against him, Signor! but if his conduct did not argue a bad head, I am sure it did a very silly one: for what with those frightful outcries, which I'll be sworn he made, deny them however he may, what with loitering behind, then driving after me like mad, bawling that thieves were upon us, and pointing out men behind trees, when there were no such things, I do think him to be the most troublesome companion I ever travelled with. And then the losing of you, Signor! why that was solely caused by him, for he would go first; and when I praised the

sagacity of my horse, he laughed outright, and went galloping up this track, and down that, so that I began to fancy the devil had taken his form for want of a worse; and, indeed, most devilishly we were bewildered, for we could hardly tell our right from our left. Are you here, Ercolani? said he, in a strange kind of tone. I wish I were anywhere else, answered I; for unless the saints befriend us, I think that we have every surety of a very dismal lodging. And then we consulted which way to pursue our research for you. Well, words waxed very high, till, in the worst of our altercation, both agreed to take a track distinct from those we quarrelled about. So due south we went. But each step grew worse; and as we were completely lost, I protested, that as the rider had driven to so ill an event, it were but just that the horse should have his turn; accordingly I gave mine the rein. But while I stood athwart an opening, lifting my eyes to

heaven, and crossing my breast in every direction, that unbelieving Pierre, an enemy to all catholic devotion, bounces plump against the flank of my ruminating beast; bolting past with such a shock, that the poor animal stumbled into a hole, and though I roared and roared, I was obliged to get out by myself at last."

He then acquainted his master with his subsequent adventures, which safely concluded in the hospitable cottage; interspersing the relation with high encomiums on his steed, accompanied by avowals of a thorough contempt for Pierre, whose rough treatment of an animal, for which Claudio knew that his man cherished a great tenderness and veneration, had wrought him to so ridiculous a pitch of animosity.

Having finished his own tale, he ventured to inquire of Claudio respecting his wanderings, and where he had parted from the Chevalier. "Alas!" exclaim-

ed the Italian, whose grief refused an explanation, "in our speed lies my only hope ever to rejoin him: so peace, Ercolani! and proceed." This command, though unaccounted for, the Squire dutifully obeyed; and far they left the fatal wood behind them.

The intended journey was little more than half performed, when they rode through a scattered village, and at its uttermost end, stopped before the door of an auberge to bait the horses. A Man in uniform was leaning against one of the windows. After eyeing him stedfastly a time, Claudio knew him to be a trooper belonging to the corps marching with that which Henri commanded. He immediately called him down, and inquired if any more of the troop were in the village. The soldier knew but of four or five beside himself; and he informed the Italian, that the troops had reposed thereabout during the night, but early as the dawn had recommenced their

march. Uncertain of overtaking them, and hearing that he had liberty to spend some days with his friends, Claudio determined to confide in this man for the execution of a purpose he suddenly resolved; wherefore he inveigled him aloof, and confidentially imparted to him the dreadful circumstances attending the Chevalier's disappearance. As Henri was young and brave, he was generally beloved among the soldiers; and so much was this particular man shocked by his misfortune, that he readily acquiesced in the plan recommended by Claudio, and left the room to arrange for its realization.

As Rowland was rather elevated in the ranks, he possessed a considerable influence over his comrades, which he so sensibly exerted, that before Ercolani could devour the contents of a dish before him, he was desired to summon his master. On coming down, Claudio beheld four well mounted troopers, headed by Rowland; beside an auxiliary half-

dozen of equestrian peasantry, who made a formidable though not a very ornamental addition to the company. It must be owned that their horses were wretched and shapeless jades, possessing an abstract of almost every defect incident to their kind; so that when Ercolani's stallion spurned one of them with his heel, the rider extolled the action as an indisputable sign of a superior genius. A sarcasm which certainly could have dispersed the group, but for the prudence of Claudio, under whose guidance they pursued the same road he recently had come.

The number and the inequality of the troop much delayed its progress; Claudio's impatience being sharply aggravated before the cottage greeted his view. When it arose to sight, his joyous countenance communicated a new vigour to his followers, who spurred on amain. Approached within a few roods, Claudio commanded a halt: accompanied by

Rowland and Ercolani, he rode on, dismounted close to the door, and entered. The terror and precipitation of his flight had prevented his remarking any clue whereby he could return; a resolution he had not then embraced, and to advance which he was now obliged to act as follows. To a rustic who was seated amid his family, he held out money, and swore to double it, would he be their conductor through the labyrinthian forest. The peasant, whose eyes caught the lustre of the gold, withdrew his hand when he heard what service was to earn it; but the temptation was too strong, and in a stammering voice he asked Whither he would wish to go? As Claudio was unwilling to avow his intentions prematurely, he gave an ambiguous answer: he then desired him to prepare for instant departure, and threw the money into the lap of the wife. His authoritative tone, aided by his generosity, interested the paysanne in his behalf; and

bestirring herself, she soon occasioned the tardy Michael to quicken in obedience. But when the Cavalier, his new guide, and the others, rejoined the rest of the company, an unforeseen difficulty presented itself in the exigence of a steed for Michael, whose pedestrial proceeding was impracticable. The peasants unanimously refused to take him up behind: perhaps, from a reasonable care both for himself and their horses, whose sharp unfleshy bones presented a seat as uncomfortable to the would-be rider, as his weight could be burdensome to the animals. A soldier, flanked by a large war-saddle, and shackled in armour and accoutrements, was a being too terrible for such familiarity; wherefore the reluctant Squire found himself under the humiliating necessity of admitting a double burden on his genius. This embarrassment overcome, the whole party pierced the boundaries of the forest. When they had ridden for a consider-

able time, and were advanced into its very bosom, the Italian suddenly stopped, as Michael, in spite of Ercolani's remonstrances, had, for some time, loudly warned him, that if they went much farther in that direction he should be ignorant of the way. And now Claudio desired him to bring them shortly to the secret valley, which he began to describe, and also the edifice situated within it. At this command, the horror-stricken guide began to roll his eyes, and mutter a heartfelt repentance for having undertaken so perilous a commission; but the Italian, despising and disregarding his fears, insisted on a prompt performance of his will. The poor man resisted until the peasantry came up, and learned from his supplications what was the service they so artfully had been induced to embark in: in consequence they testified against Rowland a great resentment, which proved itself to be founded in an unmanly pusillanimity.

When the soldiers were instructed in the scruples of their rustical companions, they piquantly derided them, and professed themselves faithful to the cause of Claudio; who, encouraged by their firmness, and convinced how necessary was a vigorous exertion, drew his poniard, and clapt it close to the throat of Michael. "Dastard!" cried the furious Cavalier, "if you shrink from our agreement, this shall be the reward of your faithlessness. I have purchased a portion of your time, and till it be expired you shall be my submissive slave. You know my will; likewise you know the consequence of slighting it; so let your cowardice still direct you: before you harm is uncertain, but here it is unavoidable." He then ordered Ercolani to gallop foremost, and the peasants awed into a sullen silence, followed the Cavalier and his troopers.

At length they arrived on the brow of the heights that overlooked the val-

ley, in the centre of which stood the mystic chateau. There the Squire stopt, and turning to his master, besought him not to tempt his ruin by entering those dreadful walls, for that Michael had related circumstances respecting them which made his hair stand an end. The Cavalier was chagrined that his Squire, whom he knew to be as valiant as loyal, should be infected by so vague an apprehension, and he sharply rebuked the folly of his petition. Michael then led them around, and they began to descend by a gradual path hollowed into the earth. The repulse Ercolani had experienced, was not otherwise effectual on his fears, than to confound them with wonder at his master's presumptuous rashness, which he was convinced would come to an evil issue, as his steed stumbled; a mishap immediately received by the credulous rider for an infallible portent of ill.

Without misadventure they all reach-

ed the gates. After a violent knocking, to which no notice was bestowed from within, they attempted to force them open; but their united efforts were unavailing, the fastenings being immovable: at length they paused to recover breath, and advise what further to undertake. The local ignorance of the troop submitted to the dearly bought knowledge of the Cavalier, and they proceeded round the walls, in compliance with his opinion, until they all came before that part of the structure whence he escaped: there they stopt: yet human figure or voice they neither saw nor heard on any of the ramparts or towers, and but for the careful security of the portal, they would have thought the place absolutely deserted. Claudio retrograded a few paces, the better to view the whole extent of the wing: by ascending a knoll a little more distant, he overlooked the wall, and gliding his eyes from the buttress which

favoured his descent, he fixed them upon the eventful chamber, which windows were down, and their shutters closed.

He determined to scale the ramparts, and make an entry through that part, whatever might be the opposition. He communicated that resolution to the company, who shewed a fearful reluctance to fulfil it; but Claudio and his Squire afforded them a brave example, for, giving each other assistance, they soon surpassed every obstacle: in which conduct they were successfully imitated by the encouraged party, who, binding their horses to the brambles below, climbed to the top, and rejoined the Cavalier. The Italian then broke through the casements, and jumped into the room. It was hideously disordered; the boards being foully stained with blood; particularly in that part where he so narrowly had eluded assassination: their slipperiness was increased by the gore; which served to guide the observant Ca-

valier; who, discriminating the stained footmarks according to their various directions, discovered the hidden door, before which the tapestry was redrawn; and forcing his passage, entered the miserable chamber. Preceded by the Cavalier, the troop crossed it in profound silence, and proceeded along a dark serpentine passage that brought them to the head of the corridor, half a dozen paces beyond the bed-chamber door, wherethrough they all re-entered.

The peasants being ignorant of what woeful business occasioned their journey thither, were lost in horror and amazement at what they witnessed; which the Italian no sooner heeded, than he disclosed, as concisely as his full heart would permit, all that was requisite to their understanding the spectacle that appalled them. He then snatched the helm of Henri from the corner where it was cast; invoked its master, and presented it to the soldiers; conjuring them,

as they regretted his loss, to persist in an undaunted research : then adjusting it on his own head, he cried, that it ever had been used to act as a beacon in the pursuit of honourable danger, and, at the head of the obedient party, ran down the corridor. After an examination of numberless apartments, naked of human vestige, they struck down the grand spiral stair-case which terminated in the second hall. That was dismal as the rest, and the first signs of inhabitants, out of the upper chamber, were distinguishable in the apartment, wherein the Italian had slept the preceding night. There the hearth was not quite cold, but the embers displayed no spark of fire, and were rudely scattered about. An idea of their concealment, started into Claudio's mind, which cherished it for the most reasonable surmise of the conduct espoused by the villains ; and open to the peril of a surprisal by ambushment, he cautioned his followers

against negligent separation: he afterwards proceeded through either wing; examined and re-examined every quarter in the building; hall, entry, court, or chamber, with ineffectual scrutiny.

Overlooking no accessible place, they persevered in their labour for many hours, till the fading light of day obliged them to discontinue it with the utmost dissatisfaction at its uselessness. They were much surprized to find the evening set in, for the diurnal seasons could but ill be denoted within a mansion which the sun's brightest rays failed to enlighten: all was duskiness, mystery, horror, and with a sudden conviction of the reason in his friends suspicions, Claudio ascertained the dusty worm-eaten banners, suspended in the grand hall, to be embellished with the arms of the antique marquisate de Souvricour.

As Claudio was stedfast to the opinion that the house was not, as it seemed, deserted, he desired to spend

the night therein; hoping that the ruffians, when elated by the apparent removal of danger, would bring themselves to detection: yet dubious of the acquiescence of them, who were with him, to so hazardous a project, he endeavoured to beguile their attention until night blackened; which he did so artfully, that they thought not of a return, till it was evidently endangered by the darkness. The interested Cavalier aggravated the probable mischances on their road to so formidable a degree, that the whole party shrunk from the idea of encountering them, and assented to the remaining where they were, as the less dangerous. Accordingly, dispositions were made for their lodging. Having stabled the horses, and collected a quantity of fire-wood, they preferred the apartment in the second hall. There they kindled a splendid flame, for though the third quarter of the year scarcely were expired, the place was unseasonably

cold; and besides removing that local inclemency, the fire was the only means they had, to illumine their chamber. Carefully arranging their arms, where they might be forthwith found, should occurrence require them; the entire troop couched about the hearth.

The awful mysteriousness of the place, and the circumstances that tended to their present situation, caused a transient fear that chilled the bosom of the hardiest, and made silence painful: at length, the condescension of the Cavalier relaxed their respectful forbearance, and encouraged them to join in conversation. As the subject naturally enough was founded in their agitation, it concerned their temporary abode, of which every rumour in the least inclining to its disreputation, through numerous gradations of provincial credulity or wilful aggravation, was discussed: principally by the peasants, of whom Michael being the oracle, arrogated to himself the ar-

bitration of any dispute respecting the truth of their various stories. But he had not any opportunity whereby to exert his presidentship: the minds of his auditors were softened for the wildest impression; and tale surmounted tale, till any accidental noise roused them all in sympathetic terror. Extravagant as were most of these stories, Claudio could understand an alarming coherence in their several arguments, which influenced him to conclude, that an inexplicable mystery enveloped the forest and its vicinal parts.

Their remembrance or invention exhausted, each one subsided into a mute rumination. The time went by uninterrupted by any thing hostile to the company. Claudio spent the hours in poignant reflection, and mournfully saw the dawn open on him, without occurrence consolatory to his friendly grief.

The peasants, who from a dread of more perilous departure, not complai-

sance to the Cavalier, had consented to remain in a place their bigotry held accursed, no sooner espied the solar beams gilding the height of the ramparts, than they moved to go: against which the Italian saw it would be in vain to remonstrate, as with him they had passed an apprehensive night, unrefreshed by food or sleep. He, therefore, wisely submitted with the best grace his mortification would allow him to assume; and while Rowland with the rest went round to caparison their horses, he ascended to the top of a high detached tower, that stood at the front of the exterior area: he judged it to be the Warder's lodge, for it commanded an extensive view of the country; especially towards the west: on the other points, the sight was somewhat obstructed by the crowded forest and the pinnacled mountains, whose tops were clothed in mist yet unmelted by the sun. Within a furlong of the western wing, bounded by an

elevated bank, flowed the broad and impetuous river which Claudio understood to be the Rhone. Its neighbourhood struck him to be highly favourable to the purposes of pillage, and its transportation, which he doubted not were the practices of the habitators of that remote chateau, the vaults beneath which, might by subterranean excavations be connected with the caverns hollowed into the rugged boundary of the stream; a contrivance to facilitate escape likewise, or afford concealment.

Possessed by this notion, he intimated it to his followers; protested the very fastness of the gatt, which they were then undoing, evidenced the lurking of people within; and required their assistance in a new and better promising research, which was to visit each penetrable gap along the river side. Their visages, were blank of civility to this request; so Claudio forbore its repetition, and no longer delayed their return. From the helmet of his friend he pluck-

ed the brilliant star, and suspending it from his neck, vowed unceasing activity in his deliverance: he then followed the troop, bestowing a painful and lingering look on the walls, which he still suspected to be the prison-house of his beloved Chevalier.

As they rode briskly on, the Italian considered what conduct it behoved him to take: so various were the inducements, that he reached the village, whence he set out on his vain pursuit, ere he ultimately resolved to proceed with the fleetest celerity to Chateau Rivemont, and instruct the Marquis in his son's misfortune. This resolution he wasted no time in putting into practice; for after allowing his horses some time to be refreshed, he bade farewell to Rowland, and dispersed a recompence among his companions; then turning from their acknowledgments, he travelled the road to a town many leagues distant.

There he rested the night, but early as the prime of day continued to journey over the Rhone, and athwart the southern Lionois; so that in a very few days he reached an auberge, not many miles distant from upper Languedoc, in which province was situated the Marquisate de Souvricour. This latter day's travelling had overpowered them with fatigue; so finding pleasant refreshment, and apt attendance, they appropriated the afternoon to the renovation of themselves and steeds. They remounted with high spirits, and as they had deviated from the proper road, because its meanders dissatisfied the impatience of the Cavalier, he curiously inquired the readiest way across the country; in which being instructed by the good people of the house, he rode off, and left them delighted with the liberality du Chevalier très aimable.

In a not unpleasing perturbation of spirit, effected by the wine which to

satisfy his ardent thirst he copiously had imbibed, also elated with hope that the journey was drawing near to a close which only friendly zeal could have enabled him so indefatigably to prosecute, the Italian struck his spurs into the sides of his courser, which feeling the sharp incitement drove thundering on. Poor Ercolani, inferior in horse or horsemanship, was unequal to this furious speed, and often retarded it, by necessitating his master to stop till he rejoined him; and though he felt much mortified by these delays, yet all emulation of an equal pace proved vainly painful to his steed. However, his concern was so high for the character of that favorite, that he glozed the truth, and attached the blame to whatever his ingenuity could devise, until they were advanced into the barren bosom of a spacious heath. As this became gloomy beneath the brown shades of evening, Ercolani's fancy being agitated by the experience

of the recent misadventure, began to ferment emotions so disagreeable to his breast, that exclusive consideration gave way; and feeling a most uneasy sensation when once more left behind, he besought Claudio to slacken a little.

His request being complied with, he rode beside his master, and soon found fellowship to be so heartening, that his habitual talkativeness broke out; and after several prefatory hums, which were meant to reproach the taciturnity of the Cavalier, he began to speak in an invective mode of Pierre, whose similar disappearance with Henri was as yet unknown to him. But it being otherwise with the Italian, this ill chosen topic freshened those griefs which somewhat had been alleviated by the diversity of object, and he rebuked it with anger, and rebuffed the Squire to a dumb rumination of his bitter dislike to Pierre, who, by his contumacious behaviour, had incurred the sharpest displeasure

which Ercolani's simple head could conceive, when insulted in its vanity of importance.

The western horizon was now streaked with the rearward lines of light, and these faded away before any human habitation cheered the prospect: they had passed a vast expanse of level waste, and the thickening mist shrouding what was before them, presented it to the fancy immeasurable in extent. With thoughts too much employed to bestow a moment's reflection on bodily danger, the Cavalier dashed onward; but Ercolani by recollection of the past was prompted to an apprehension of that to come, and bestirred himself in preparation for the worst, locking his arquebuse, and accoutring himself in big looks.

Meantime the fog condensed into clouds, yet they were proceeding boldly, when the voice of an invisible person squeaked forth, "Noble captain! they are all gone out!" Ercolani heard the

sound without distinguishing the sense, and levelling his weapon, discharged it; a shriek audibly feminine saluted him in return; Claudio censured his precipitancy, and turned to the spot whence it issued. He found an antiquated beldam prostrated along the ground: when they raised her, it seemed that mere fright had so affected her, for thanks to the imperfection of Ercolani's aim, she otherwise was unhurt. She soon recovered her courage when she found herself in honorable company; and began with the garrulity natural to age to tell them, that her cottage was not a dozen paces distant, and that she had ventured from it to pluck some herbs from the moist earth around it. When Claudio spoke of his journey, and pointed out the direction in which he wished to continue, she affirmed that it was absolutely impassable, as the fog, which dissembled the swamps and abysses that lay before him, would deceive him into certain

peril: she concluded an enumeration of the manifold difficulties that endangered his proceeding, by an obsequious invitation to repose in her humble dwelling. As this appeared the most reasonable step, Claudio accepted it, and was guided by his tottering hostess to the door of her hut: having accommodated the horses beneath an adjoining shed, the Squire followed his master and entered.

"I cannot promise you very delicate food," said the old woman; "so you will be much disappointed in that expectation; but all that my poor pantry affords your honours are heartily welcome to."

"A mighty civil kind of a body," observed Ercolani, who was vainly pleased by an address which ranked him with the Cavalier: but darkness confounds all human observation of degree; so that before a light was kindled, she knew not that she harboured the

lord and his servant, neither did they suspect nature to be guilty of a figure so hideous and loathsome. It might once be tall, and in youth erect, but hardly within memory, for many years were requisite so to deface its proportions. Her neck defied discovery, and her sunken head shook with the palsy of age as though it would have fallen, but for the friendly height of her two shoulders, which long had discontinued any rivalry, as one had acquired a considerable ascendancy above the other: while her skinny bosom, parched into scales, was callous to the repeated assaults of her fleshless and acute chin, which cruelly mocked its entire loss of feminine plumpness. She moved about with surprising celerity it must be owned, but that was effected by the irregularity of her limbs, which bowed into almost every direction, enabled her to turn any way with equal ease and grace. In a word, she was a creature even more terrific

than disgusting; and for the first half hour, Ercolani sate in the most tormenting expectation of some sudden exhibition of witchcraft.

However, the earnest dispatch which she manifested in preparing for their entertainment, greatly softened his opinion of her: but what completely reconciled him to her personal deformity, was the good natured freedom with which she engaged him as an occasional assistant in her culinary composition, for that provided him with many opportunities whereby to display his own proficiency in that important art. After a thousand little whispering consultations in which Italian suggestions of improvement generally surrendered to the vain positiveness of French egotism, the product of their mutual labour was displayed; apparently a wholesome supper. The consequential Squire helped his directress to draw from a recess an unwieldy oaken table, on which she spread a nap-

kin, and arranged the dishes: she then made an attempt at a courtesy, for the right interpretation of which she was solely indebted to the quick conception of the Cavalier, who returned her civility, drew his chair, and began to eat with a good appetite. In the course of his meal he asked for some drink; but as the situation of the table inconvenienced the hostess's approach to a cupboard, wherein the liquor was, she said, he proposed to withdraw it: with that intention he took hold of two rings, attached to the sides, but they yielded to his strength, and he pulled open a drawer, that the old woman immediately reached her hand to reclose, but not before a downward glance of Claudio settled on the shiny blade of a dagger. "Parbleu!" cried she, preventing his remark, "poor Leonard, what will he do!" "Pray who is this same Leonard?" asked Ercolani.

"My son," answered the old woman;

and the staff of my age. He goes every now and then to a village three or four miles from here, and so the way being dangerous, he accounts this his safeguard; but negligently has left it behind him to-day." Saying this with the promptitude of integrity, she took it up, and with a perfect air of unconcern, employed it to uncork a small bottle, from which she presented a cup of wine to her guest.

Though not very excellent, the wine was pleasing to the palate; and the first bottle being soon exhausted, a second was brought out to the infinite gratification of the Squire: but hardly did he brush the dust from the throat, ere the loud clattering of hoofs announced the approach of horsemen, of whom one shouted loudly and repeatedly at the door of the cottage. "Stay a moment!" said the old woman, laying her shrivelled hand upon Ercolani's: "perhaps there may not be need for this second

bottle." Then taking it from him, she waddled to the door, and pulling it open, exclaimed while she stepped over the threshold, "I am glad that you are come! noble luck to-night!"

They, to whom she spoke, proved not to be him or they for whom the address was meant; for with disregard to her speech, a voice requested shelter beneath her roof. "My house is full," replied she in a tone of disappointment, and re-entered much disordered. "Our lord will recompence you munificently," urged the out-door spokesman, whom it was not easy to repulse. "One word is as good as an hundred," answered the firm old woman; "I tell you, this is no place for you. If, as you say, you really be in want of a lodging, why the priority lies before you; the further side is in tolerable condition, and contains habitable apartments." Headless to move extreamly, she excluded the travellers so hastily, that Claudio's interference in

their favour came too late, for she was obdured to all subsequent expostulation; wherefore he angrily turned from the decrepit hag, who less easily escaped from the lickerish Ercolani, as by him she was questioned, why she was so particular about the unopened bottle. "I suspected that my boy might be come back," replied the confident old woman; "and I know that he will bring wine more worthy your master's and your own taste."

"I understood that your son went on foot," said the Squire.

"Yea," answered she; "but he has friends, and I warrant that they would readily mount him in, such a night as this is."

"But," continued Ercolani, "didn't you hear that there were more than one horseman? I judged them to be a whole troop long before they came up."

"My ears are not the best," replied the artful old woman. "When as

youthful as yourself my senses were as apt." Then being presented with a full cup of the desired wine, he found the double dose of liquor and flattery so gratifying, that he forbore further interrogation, and allowed the old beldam to resume her position at Claudio's elbow. After some time, the latter said, "What priory is that you recommended?"

"A deserted building not a stone's throw from my door," his hostess replied. "The fog concealed it when you came to this quarter, else it could not have escaped your notice, for it covers a large space of ground, and in some parts is nearly entire."

"How can those men discover it?" asked Claudio. "The same fog that obscured it from me, will obscure it from them." "It is chiefly dissipated," said the woman: "besides they all had torches, so any difficulty will be born of their own blunderheads." The family

arity of her speech offended the Italian, who, alike wearied by his hostess and his journey, desired to be ushered to his bed. The old woman cheerfully obeyed, and professed a similar inclination, "Leonard will hardly be back now," she muttered, while ascending the cottage stairs to direct Claudio to his chamber; "therefore 'twould be simple to sit up later with that expectation." She pointed to the room, and wishing the Cavalier a pleasant repose, turned down again. In the next moment, Ercolani being warned by his master, that he forgetfully had left the arquebuse below, descended in obedience to fetch it. On re-entering the supper room, he expressed much surprize at a fresh faggot being laid on the irons, but the old woman excused it by saying, That she was accustomed through infirmity constantly to lie with a fire near her bed. On hearing that, Ercolani inquisitively glanced around, until he espied a wretched rug.

huddled in one corner; he then bade her a good night, and went up with melancholy expectance of as miserable an accommodation. Herein he was pleasantly undeceived, for being dismissed by the Cavalier, he impatiently undressed, extinguished the light, and, giddy with the fumes of indigestion, resigned himself to stupid, unrefreshing sleep.

As Claudio had been familiarized to every kind of couch in the mutable camp, he was not at all incommoded by the coarseness of that which he now stretched upon: besides, the engrossments of his mind were conducive to bodily hardihood, wherefore no frivolous consideration interrupted his meditations. Reconciled to the Divinity, and to himself, he composed his limbs, and hastily sunk into oblivial happiness.

His repose was not permanent, being in the first hour disturbed by incongruous dreams; for, in reality, an outward noise influenced and accommodated his

self to these, as every child of nature has experienced. Once too loudly made, it strained the bonds of sleep; yet was the Cavalier too faintly alarmed in sense to be awakened in understanding, and he started up in that stupor prevalent while reason slumbers, ignorant whether the sound was ringing in his ears or his imagination; its louder repetition completely awoke him, but to the irresolution of terror; and he sat for several moments upright in bed, so benumbed in every faculty that he was powerless to move.

He was beguiled by the mutability and comprehensiveness of vision into a belief, that the night was half spent; and he listened to an untimely and indistinct stirring of persons in the lower room. As this recommenced after a moment's cessation, he collected his dispersed thoughts, and tremulously quitted the bed; with steps of cautious lightness he sought his clothes; and with intervals

of breathless attention, drew them attentively about him. He then took his sword; crept to the door; unlatched it; but stood undecided what to undertake: chance soon decided for him. Describing circles before his body to warn it of projection, his sword encountered an obstacle that returned no sound. The Cavalier judged it to be of human dimensions; and rushing forward with desperation, he vigorously grasped the naked throat of a man. "O St. Januarius!" ejaculated the faltering wretch. With this invocation Claudio was not unfamiliar; and relaxing his fingers, he whispered "Ercolani!"

"Oh, Lord, Signor!" identified the half-throttled Squire, who, bare to his shirt, and shivering with conflicting fear and cold, was truly standing in the passage at the head of the stairs.

"What brought you hither in this condition?" interrogated the Italian.

"The devil and his clan!" answered

the Squire: "for if the second be not in the person of that cursed old hag, I'll cease to have faith in the first. But for Heaven's sake hush, Signor! discovery of our watchfulness may bring about us the whole gang."

"Hist!" said Claudio, retreating to his chamber.

"I have been hearkening this half hour," said Ercolani, with the culpable exaggeration of custom.

"And what have you heard?" was earnestly asked by his master.

"Enough to convince me that we are in the power of cut-throats," was the daunting reply; which was immediately succeeded by the confirmation of hoarse voices, beneath where they stood: after a moment's commotion they subsided into confused murmurings, as though by authoritative suppression. Claudio inquired if Ercolani had secured the arms. "Safe, safe, in my room," re-

turned the Squire, whose jaws clashed in dolorous concert.

“ They must be brought hither,” said the Italian. “ Put on the garments which are beneath your arm.” The Squire dutifully attempted to do as he was bid, but, for the first time, he found it a tedious labour to dress; and not till after numberless awkwardnesses, and consequent corrections, did he stand up completely apparelled. He then stole along the passage, and returning with the arms, found his master at the window, which he already had unclasped. “ Softly shut to the door,” commanded Claudio, “ and give me your assistance, for the earth not being many feet below, the descent cannot be hazardous.” By Ercolani’s aid he got out, and hanging by his hands, groped about with his toes in hope to find some jutting beam-end whereon to rest them; but disappointed in that idea, he dropped with more boldness than forethought, for he struck

upon some shelving boards, which yielded with a noisy crash, and the Cavalier was instantly alarmed by a tumultuous clamour within; while the affrighted Ercolani, leaning out as far as he could safely equilibrate his body, reproached the clumsiness of his master, and bemoaned his own exalted station.

The Italian was so provoked by this unseasonable and unmanly behaviour, that he disdained expostulation, and commanded him to be silent: he was so; but only to renew his incautious outcry in the next moment with increase of dolor. In vain did the Cavalier, who was conscious that their escape depended on their secrecy, denounce his impatience, and threaten desertion; the Squire more piteously persisted; but was so inarticulate from terror, that he was long before he could make Claudio understand, that men were then at the door.

In such a moment delay was sure to be fatal. "Fling down the arms!"

cried the Cavalier—"Myself! Myself!" exclaimed Ercolani. "But first the arms!" shouted the Italian, at whose feet they were immediately cast; while a sharp crash within, which proved the bursting of the door, so electrified the tottering Squire, that he cast himself headlong down, and but for the kind intervention of his master must have suffered a severe bodily shock against the ground: as it was, he was saved by the happiest favour of Providence, for scarcely was he fallen before the keen stroke of a sabre was dealt on the place he quitted; so artfully directed, that his skull was merely a hair-breadth from its destructive edge; on which failure the robber bestowed an imprecious curse: this swelled Ercolani's exultation, but soon as he regained his feet, he was quickly questioned by Claudio, "Whither he had led the horses?"

"To a Novel on the contrary side," he replied, and advanced to guide the

Cavalier; but the cracking of the crazy stairs within, beneath the number of descendants, instructed them in the impossibility of securing the animals before the robbers would issue and assail them; wherefore they turned away, and run into the heath. The vapour of midnight, damp and unwholesome, hung in dismal clouds over the ground; a very few yards of which the strongest sight could command to step with confidence. As the stagnation of the air made it difficult to respire, they were soon exhausted; they stopped; hearkened with their ears to the ground; and became persuaded, that if pursuit were made, it had erred another way. While they communed what course to take, they dejectedly considered the cheerless vast, which, no longer being interrupted by the low-roofed cottage, was drearily blank in every quarter but the western, where a great pile of irregular buildings darkened the pale mist, rising in black vo-

lumes, till its lofty spires dissolved into the gloom. When he reflected on this appearance, Claudio suspected that it might be the priory; and, full of hope, that he could find assistants in the travellers, whom he supposed to be lodged therein, he moved hastily towards it.

Within several yards from its extreme boundary, the earth was overgrown by flags, brambles, furze, and all the worthless exuberance of uncultivated ground; so that they experienced access to be most tiresome, and were retarded by the difficulty of trampling a path, until their ears were overtaken by a sullen confusion of voices; and looking back, they descried many lights redly glimmering through the filmy night. This spectacle urged them to double speed, and they came before a part of the wall, storm-riven into a wondrous ample chasm. The huge misshapen fragments, which choked this entrance, were slippery with moss, and splintered so point-

edly by the forcible manner in which they had been broke from the mother-stone, that a fall might have occasioned an imperfect empalement: nor was this their only inconvenience; for instable to the footing, they rocked beneath the weight of the Italians, and oftentimes disjoining, betrayed their feet adown the gaping hollow; then as treacherously reclosing, they crushed them between the rugged sides. Nor did the travellers dare, when stumbling, to steady themselves by catching hold of the ivy'd prominences on either hand, lest, loose and ponderous, they should roll upon their limbs: wherefore, with precarious and studious steps they surmounted that ruinous barrier, and leapt down within side, where darkness reigned unrivalled.

A second wall, cold and moist, repelled their groping hands; and they found it to be the interior side of an imbowed passage, which branched to either hand. This passage they conjectured to be one

of those usually hollowed through the stupendous mass that incases a religious house, for the purpose of secreting the church's endowments and relics, which monkish prejudice imagined to be in some degree tainted by laical gaze; but its more particular use must have been to preserve them from the irreligious rapine of aforesaid times. Each drawing his sword, and feeling his way, moved slowly on.

Its surprising length confirmed them in their first opinion; but they began to misdoubt any discoverable outlet being before them, when Claudio, who was the forwarder, found the top of the arch gradually to lower, and, at the same place, the ground to sink beneath his feet: he perceived that he was at the verge of a flight of steps, down which for a complete minute he intrepidly descended; and entered a second passage similar to the former, but deepened into the entrails of the earth, for its effects

on the nerves of the Italians, were immediate and alarming. A corrupt stench fumed from beneath their feet, and combined with the breezeless air to make the place well nigh suffocative. Still Claudio was deaf to the arguments of his Squire, and refused to discontinue a progress, which, from its mysterious peculiarity, he expected would bring him into some central chamber, once sacred to the monastic despot, who knew the use of that excavation: and thence, he judged it within the power of his lungs to arouse the men whom he sought. With this trust he went on, but not directly as before, for the way many times abruptly turning, multiplied its impediments every pace, and narrowed so considerably, that he could reach across with outstretched arms: but stedfast to one side, he walked deathly still, and without hesitation, until he conceived that he heard a distant noise: he stopped with every sense strained to painful heed,

and desired his Squire to hearken likewise. All relapsed into unbroken silence. The Cavalier attempted to smile at the dominion of fancy, but that smile contracted the ghastliness of terror, when he heard the noise repeated, and his own name feebly but plaintively pronounced. The next moment it again arose, but fainter still, it fluttered through the sepulchral vault in dolesome notes. "Ercolani!" cried the Cavalier: Ercolani seemed to be in a worse consternation than his master, for he answered not. "Ercolani!" cried Claudio in a louder voice: the instinctive echo caught the word, and fanned it with a thousand reverberations. Feeling up and down the wall, he fell into a temporary inanity of thought, when he found that the Squire was absent. Half choaked with mingled fright and fume, he gasped most fearfully for breath; then taking the contrary side for his clue, to that whereby he came, he returned with heavy de-

jected tread. A place whither the light of heaven never pierced, the fermenting mind had wide scope to throng with imageries most awful to its own apprehension: this experienced Claudio, who panic stricken often paused, and pausing proved that which he feared to be the nameless abortion of his fanciful brain. Too free an indulgence in such heated conceits will consume the noblest reason, the brain being limited in endurance, as is the body; as substance crushes the latter, so intense and vivid thought can distract the other. No longer diverted in sense, his head began to swim in oblivious phrenzy; bewildered in the horrors of darkness, forsakement and monumental putrescence, he lost all method of deliverance; and wandering on uncheered by object, his perturbation became so violent, that he knew not how to go; was so completely lost, that he could not discriminate the way outward from that inward; and unnerved by

the exertion of an imploring shout, he dropt giddily down.

Having reposed in this forlorn condition for some time, he on a sudden started, as if newly awakened from a trance, and smiting his forehead, arose on one knee in a posture of wild attention to a distant noise. It was the outcry of men in harsh and dissonant contention; but, as a proof of human vicinity, it thrilled Claudio with joy; and after a delirious laugh, he moved towards it. In the noise of his own steps it became unheard, but with an anxious ear, he persisted forward. The passage he now pursued, plainly was not that through which he came; and certainly Ercolani in following him, had felt along the adverse side, which without the sharpness of an angle wound into other entries: into one of these, probably that which the Squire had taken, Claudio thought himself to be strayed. It progressively grew so slender and shallow, that he was obliged

to crawl on his hands and knees: in this attitude he had painfully dragged his body many yards, when he heard a clashing of steel; a shrill scream then shocked his ear; afterwards all resumed the stillness of perpetrated murder. The air now freshened, and laying prone on his belly, he almost strained his eyes forth from the sockets to certify whether there were an opening before him: that there really was, and soon passing through it, he uplifted his hands to heaven and breathed a fervent prayer of thankfulness.

The Cavalier stretched his limbs, which sorely had been cramped, but vainly looked for signs of those whom so distinctly he had heard. He supposed himself to be advanced into the heart of the structure, for he had emerged beneath an arch within the consecrated chapelry. There he lingered awhile, till tired of suspense he shouted violently loud; his voice resounded deep and hollow.

low, and the Italian listened to its groaning throughout the dreary place with increased awe, until he sickened at the fancy that the entombed dead plaintively moaned such profane disturbance of their repose.

Turning to leave the place, he distinguished a figure, apparently mortal, standing before him. Both were immersed in shade, and Claudio struck with glad surprize, called on Ercolani. At first the statue moved not; but on the name being repeated, it whispered an injunctive hush! Claudio stepped forward, and put forth his arm, which the supposed Squire clasped with one hand, while slowly raising the other, he pointed towards some object imperceptible to his master, whom he gently began to lead in that direction.

In great expectation the Cavalier crossed an open part, which he supposed to be the chapel itself; and, guided by the mute Squire, ascended steps unto a

long gallery, undefended by any kind of ballustrade to prevent a stumbler from falling through the vacuity. That they paced still and slow, till, arrived at the farther end, Claudio so much wondered at his conductor opening a door, that he checked him to speak, but was pulled forward, while the door reclosed with a startling noise. Though they were now in invisible darkness, yet Claudio found that his companion proceeded with confidence; and endeavouring to disengage his arm from the hand that grasped it, he slipped it through till that hand meeting his, crushed its fingers with an unrelenting pressure, and benumbed them with an icy coldness.

Astonished and alarmed, the Cavalier falteringly asked, Whither were they going? No word of answer being returned, he highly misdoubted his taciturn leader, and struggling for freedom, ordered him to declare himself. His effort and command were futile alike,

for he still was drawn on by resistless might: convinced that he widely had misdeemed this mysterious person, he cautiously extracted a poniard from his belt, and thought to transfix the hand that held his. Unutterable was his terror, when that hand relaxed not, but the point turning, innocently glided off the obdurate substance. Claudio's heart bounded against his breast, for he with whom he held commerce so intimate, seemed to be of other than mortal birth; his touch tremulated the Cavalier's frame, and the flooring crumbled beneath his ponderous footfall. The deadliness of midnight, time so grateful to the evil spirit, and the compatible solemnity of the place, confirmed him of preternatural degree in the Italian's apprehension. As they passed a dismantled window, he conceited him to be of gigantic eminence, and fastly was fainting beside so stupendous a being, when a second door widely opened, and tottering

into an illumined chamber, he looked askance with wan discountenance, and crouched beneath the full orb'd eyes of the Superior.

The latter closed the door, and oppressing the Italian with an immediate opposition of his presence, perused him by looks poignantly keen. His cheeks were uncoloured, but severe with exultation, and while a wrinkled smile flashed transient malignity past them, his high nostrils dilated with contempt.

Bigoted to the priestly doctrines of supernatural visitation being often made in mortal guise, Claudio was wrought upon by that distempered fancy to suspect some such mystic deception in the appearance before him, and, aguish in every joint, he stole half glances of doubt and dread, with the expectation to witness its miraculous transfiguration to a sublimity of form enrobed in terrors petrific or annihilative: but a casual beam from some torches fixed upright

in the decayed flooring, falling on the Unknown, who in an attitude of menace gave horror to the gloom, the Italian saw his chest to be scaled with brazen armour, and on his hands, which were accoutred in iron gauntlets, the chief cause of his superstitious dread.

After a pause, the most awful that Claudio had ever known, he heard himself questioned in a tone which extorted an unhesitating reply, "Young man, whither do you make this journey?"

"Towards the frontier town of Languedoc," answered he: "thenceforward."

"Whereto?" demanded the Superior in a voice of thunder.

"Chateau Rivemont," returned Claudio, incapable of equivocation.

"My exact surmise," remarked the Unknown in a murmur, then resuming a bolder utterance: "Young man, did any bar intervene betwixt yourself and

safety, would you not solicitously seek its removal?"

Claudio solved the artful tendency of this question, and forbore reply.

"It is the usage of the multitude," continued the Superior; "but some great minds abstract from common fellowship. In my path you are an obstacle which it needeth but a motion to crush."

"While thus?" shouted the Italian; unsheathing his sword in despair.

"Ay, what avail the braves of impotence?" cried the Superior, striking it from his hand to the farthest quarter of the room; and while his shadowing brows curled into characters of wrath, he advanced the point of his naked blade to the gasping throat of the Italian, who, seeing the blackness of foul intent o'er-spread his aspect, thought himself forsaken by chance, and falteringly muttered "In Heaven is my only hope!" This exclamation effected a deliberation in the Superior, for he shrunk into him-

self, and lowered the point of his weapon, while his expressive features underwent changes, now appalling, now encouraging to the Italian, who knew his existence to depend on the caprice of a moment.

At length this surprising man resumed. "What lenity you may experience is not to be attributed to your own deserts: deceit and fiction when detected recoil on the inventor; *for more ears may attend to a midnight tale than what the relater wots of.*" His heart distent with pride, he surveyed the abashed Cavalier, and added, "Two modes there are can only give me satisfaction. One seals you in silence perpetual, the other to silence in particular."

"Disclose the latter," said Claudio.

"A rigid oath," continued the Unknown, "which forfeiture is a continuation of this your interrupted purpose, and future act of enmity to me."

Self-preservation, the instinct of na-

ture, and generally its infirmity, now biassed Claudio in waving all manly or friendly consideration; so that but shortly hesitating, he professed himself compliant to the Superior's requisition.

"Then hearken," enjoined the latter, and in a manner gravely impressive, proceeded to dictate a form of oath solemn and unusual. In the invocations of vengeance on its violation which he forced the Italian to make, he appeared to scan the mystic tortures of the damned; so highly blazoning the punishments of perjury above the conception of Claudio, that he sickened at the possibility of incurring them, and with much reluctance pronounced those magical words which bound him irredeemably to the will of another, as the penalty of a struggle for free agency was his soul's peace.

The ceremony concluded, the Unknown's aspect shone self-gratulatory; and snatching a torch from the ground,

he withdrew to a door opposite to that wherethrough he entered; he threw it open, and, as he left the room, he turned on Claudio a reminding look, and said, "Henceforth when we meet, consider the distance of respect due to *Julian, Conte di Fiascano*."

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

SHAKESPEARE.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.







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